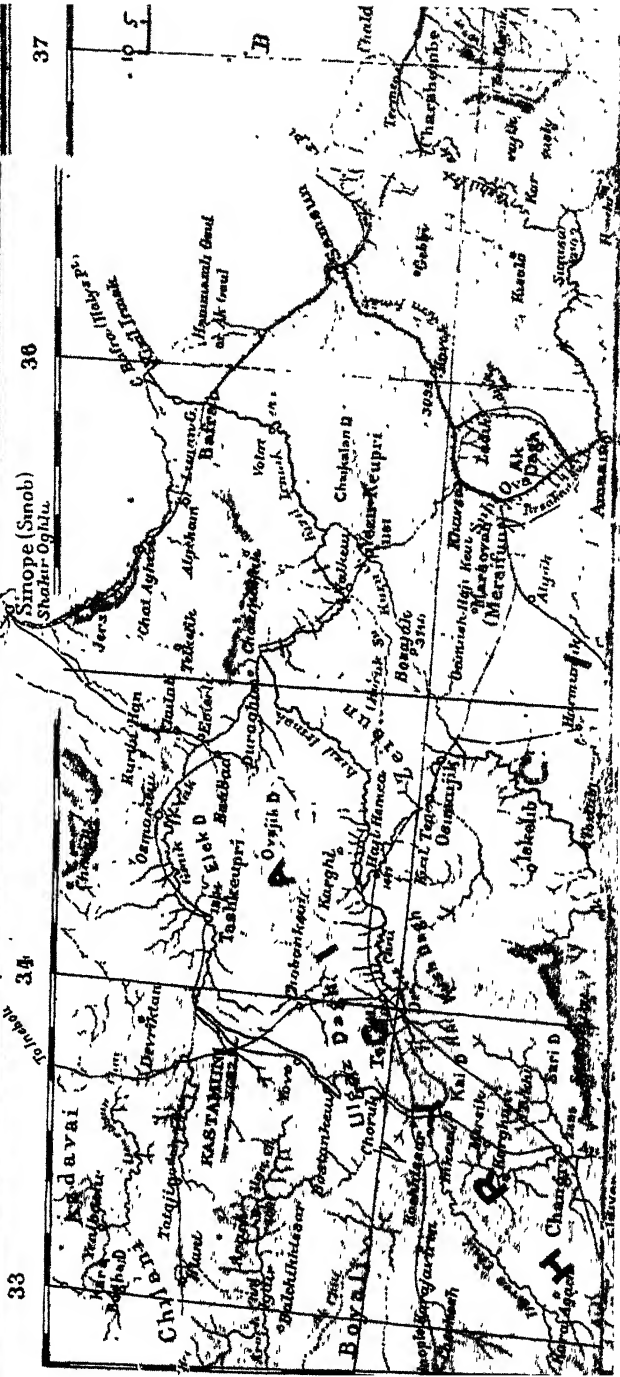


ADVENTURES IN  
TURKEY AND RUSSIA

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MAP CARRIED DURING ESCAPE

# ADVENTURES IN TURKEY AND RUSSIA

BY

E. H. KEELING

M.C.

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1924



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
BILLING AND SONS, LTD , GUILDFORD AND ESHER

CERTAIN incidents in this book have already been described in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Fortnightly Review*, and the author has to thank their publishers for permission to make use of his articles.

None of the photographs was taken by him; a prisoner of war, whether held in captivity or engaged in escaping, is usually unable to carry a camera. For the illustrations the author is indebted to the late Colonel W. E. Cramer-Roberts, and to Lady (Mark) Sykes, Mr. Douglas Carruthers, Mr. W. J. Childs, Mr. Ellsworth Huntington, Mr. W. Mansfield, Mr. R. J. Money, Major P. C. Saunders, Mr. C. L. Woolley, Mrs. H. Wilkie Young, and the Russian naval staff at Sevastopol.

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# ADVENTURES IN TURKEY AND RUSSIA

## CHAPTER I

### FIRST DAYS OF CAPTIVITY

AFTER holding out for five months—longer than Plevna or Ladysmith—Kut al Amarah was forced by lack of food to surrender to the Turks on April 29, 1916. Of the 15,000 officers and men of the garrison 1,800 had perished in action or of wounds, disease or starvation, and 1,900 had been wounded ; while the army further down the Tigris suffered 22,000 casualties in its gallant efforts to raise the siege—a terribly useless sacrifice.

The Turkish general, Khalil Pasha, promised to recommend that the garrison be allowed to go back to India on parole, and although we had, of course, no more claim to be released than any other prisoners of war, the proposal might well have been sanctioned on humane grounds. The Turks had not found it easy to feed themselves, and they would have great difficulty in feeding 13,000 prisoners as well. Being short of transport, they should not have lightly undertaken to remove so large a body of men—all more or less unfit to march—from Kut to Northern Mesopotamia or Asia Minor during the fierce heat of summer. But our hopes were not fulfilled. The Turkish War Office, doubtless after consultation with the Ger-

mans, telegraphed insisting on unconditional surrender. "The garrison," they said, "are prisoners of war, and must be treated as such." It is safe to assume that political considerations had a good deal to do with this pronouncement. The spectacle of great numbers of British and Indian troops, tattered, starved, thirsty and sick, marching as captives through the Ottoman dominions, was well calculated to put down questionings of Ottoman authority among subject Greeks, Armenians and Arabs, and to shatter the hopes they had placed in the British Empire. Our government, realising the damage that such a procession would do to British prestige in the East, actually offered the sum of a million pounds to Khalil if he would let the garrison go; but the proposal was made openly and clumsily, and only resulted in sarcastic leaders in the Constantinople press, proclaiming that the great British people, having failed to conquer the 'Turks with their swords, were now trying to corrupt them with their gold.

In communicating the decision of his government, Khalil informed General Townshend that we should be Turkey's "sincere and precious guests." The extent to which she overwhelmed her captives with hospitality is indicated by the fact that 71 per cent. of the British rank and file perished under it.\* The officers fared much better, and the Turks quite evidently considered that if they did their best for us the death of a few thousands of the men would be overlooked.

\* Parliamentary Paper, Cmd. 9208, 1918. This calculation takes no account of men who were immediately exchanged (see page 4).



THE SURRENDER OF KUT  
An imaginative German picture



On the day of the surrender two battalions of Turks, headed by a number of Turkish and German staff officers, marched in to take possession, and the last drop in our cup of humiliation was to see the Union Jack hauled down and the Ottoman flag hoisted over the *sarai* in its place. The only consolation was that almost everything of military value, including all guns, rifles and ammunition, had been destroyed on the previous day. The town contained little else that was worth seizing, and most of the Turkish and German officers suppressed looting, two soldiers who were caught red-handed being shot dead on the spot. General Townshend was allowed to keep his sword, but a few others which had been rashly retained by their owners were collected for exhibition, as we learned afterwards, in a Constantinople museum. The illustration is a reproduction of a coloured print giving a German propagandist's view of the scene at the capitulation. The ceremony was not in fact quite so picturesque.

People have asked why we did not attempt to cut our way out, like the defenders of Plevna, instead of surrendering. While any hope remained that the siege would be raised (and as late as April 15 relief was definitely promised), General Townshend's task was to stand fast. Kut lies at the point where the Gharraf leaves the Tigris, and by holding it he barred the advance of the enemy's steamers and barges (his chief means of transport) down both rivers. On the other hand, by the date relief was known to be out of the question we were reduced to a daily ration of four ounces of bread and some horseflesh, and it was physic-

ally impossible for the garrison to march the distance to the relieving force, to say nothing of fighting a battle on the way. On the day after the surrender, when all officers and men not in hospital were marched to the enemy's headquarters at Shumran, eight miles upstream, it took us eight hours to accomplish the journey, although we carried neither rifles nor kit. Even if we had been fit to make a sortie, we could not have taken with us either guns or ammunition, all animals having been killed for food.

In exchange for an equal number of *healthy* Turkish prisoners in British hands, the enemy agreed to the repatriation of all members of the garrison incapacitated for further active service. Several thousands of our men were within the definition, but only four British and six Indian officers and about a thousand of other ranks were passed as unfit. The selection was made in the hospitals by the Turkish medical officers, who obviously had their orders. Whole wards of Indians, including even the attendants, were placed on the exchange list without examination, but only with great difficulty could our doctors get a few British soldiers included. They were too big an asset as prisoners to be lightly parted with. Several of them actually died in hospital a day or two after the Turkish doctors had pronounced that they were not ill enough to be exchanged.

Nor should the men for exchange have been taken only from the hospitals. Towards the end of the siege the hospitals had become so congested with medical cases (including a disease very like cholera) that all wounded men, as soon as they were barely

able to walk, were sent back to their regiments, where they received quite as good treatment as the miserably equipped hospitals could give. Some of them were maimed, and a large proportion were utterly unfit for a long march. There were also many hundreds of unwounded men who had not been sent to hospital but whose vitality had been reduced to a very low ebb through lack of food. But the Turks said: "All these men were in the trenches; if they were fit to fight they are fit to march." Treatment more inhuman by a Power claiming to be civilised can hardly be imagined.

There was much speculation as to our destination, but far more on the question where and when we were going to get a meal. The last meagre issue of our own rations was made on the day of surrender, and there was then no food left in the town, except such as the Arab inhabitants had managed to keep hidden when their houses were searched. Khalil was full of promises, but did not appear to have made any arrangements for our sustenance, although our capitulation was a foregone conclusion for at least a week before it occurred. The only food we received from the Turks for some days was a few of their superannuated ration biscuits, made of the coarsest unhusked barley not unmixed with earth, as hard as iron, and many of them green with mould. These were ravenously devoured by the starving troops, but for men in their condition they were a most unsuitable diet, and over a hundred deaths from gastro-enteritis occurred during the first few days of captivity. Other rations were issued later, but at no time were they adequate, and a large propor-

tion of the prisoners must have died at Shumran if the enemy alone had fed them. Fortunately the Turkish general realised this and permitted General Gorringe to send us supplies from downstream. It was hoped that the mails which had been accumulating for five months below Kut might also be sent up, but as only one Turkish officer was available to censor them, very few letters were delivered, and most of us did not hear from our homes between the end of November, 1915, when Kut was invested, and the following July or August, when letters began to arrive at the prisoners' camps.

At Shumran, where we bivouacked on a bare piece of the desert, our captors interfered with us very little, and the only guard was a weak cordon of sentries. It would not have been difficult to penetrate this at night, and a bold man might with good fortune have got through on foot to General Gorringe's army. There was some talk, too, of trying to swim down to it, but few of us were physically strong enough to make the venture, and at this time it was an officer's clear duty to stay with his men. We managed to maintain discipline fairly well, though the task was not made easier when the Turks released and sent back to their regiments all men undergoing sentences of imprisonment imposed by courts-martial during the siege.

The day after we reached Shumran, General Townshend left by steamer for Baghdad, and he was taken thence to an island in the Sea of Marmara, where he remained until the armistice. It was announced that he would continue to discuss with the Turkish government the question of our release

on parole, but needless to say we heard no more of these negotiations. We were informed that the rest of the officers, British and Indian, would also be separated from their men and sent up to Baghdad by steamer, but the rank and file would have to march. The outlook for them was gloomy, and one of our generals suggested to the camp commandant that at least one British officer should accompany each regiment as interpreter, and that medical officers should also remain with their units. The proposal was accepted by the commandant, but Khalil vetoed it, and in the light of what is now known of the enemy's treatment of the men it is not surprising that he wished no British officer to witness their sufferings.

On May 6 the rank and file, British and Indian, with all warrant officers, left Shumran, escorted by Arab cavalry. Anything they wanted to take with them—water-bottles, cooking-pots, haversacks, blankets, spare clothes—had to be loaded on their backs. Each man also carried six of the hard Turkish biscuits as his rations for *three days*. The march began at two o'clock in the afternoon, about the hottest moment of a very hot day. The long column setting forth for an unknown destination was a depressing spectacle, and the officers who watched it start, and accompanied it for the first few hundred yards, wondered how many of the men would see their homes again. We were, unhappily, powerless to give them any help whatever. They themselves were quite cheerful, and it is hardly necessary to say that the British troops shouted and sang to keep their spirits up. The only doctors accompanying the column were

a

unqualified assistant surgeons, who, like the doctors remaining with us, had hardly any drugs.

Four days later, a party of 115 British officers and 240 Indian officers, with their servants and orderlies, embarked on the paddle-boat *Khalifa* for Baghdad, and it is their experiences that I shall describe. The passengers included a number of Turkish and German officers and a German war artist, and we were able to compare notes about the siege. Of soldiers to guard us there were hardly any, and a scheme was mooted to seize the ship, turn her round, and endeavour to run down past Kut to General Gorrings's force ; but the project was precarious and did not commend itself to our senior officers. The voyage to Baghdad—a distance of 200 miles—occupied three days against the strong current, now at its swiftest under the pressure of the melting snows of Armenia and Kurdistan. We were so tightly packed on deck that it was difficult to lie down, but when we thought of our men marching we could not grumble.

We passed the arch of Ctesiphon. With its 80-foot span, it is one of the most impressive ruins in the world, but its interest to us, as the scene of the battle of six months before—a victory which led only to retreat, isolation and surrender—was more personal. Thoughts of what might have been were, however, distracted by a crowd of dirty and ragged Arab men, women and children, who followed us along the bank for hours, showing their delight at our capture by dancing, yelling and letting off their rifles in the air, and their idea of our destiny by drawing their fingers across their throats. The feelings of this villainous-looking mob were appar-

ently not very deep, for when we threw them the mouldier of our biscuits they all with one accord ceased their hymn of hate and began to scramble for our largess.

We reached Baghdad on May 13. As our ship steamed through the suburbs which fringe the river we saw dozens of houses crammed with men in red-and-white nightgowns, and we learned that the town contained 13,000 of the enemy's wounded—striking testimony to the casualties inflicted by the garrison and by the relieving force. Most of them were convalescent, but transport beyond Baghdad was so scarce and the journey so arduous that no attempt had been made to evacuate them. This gave us some inkling of the trouble in store for our unfortunate troops when the enemy began to move them into Northern Mesopotamia and beyond.

Our steamer was moored alongside the imposing British Residency. This also was now a hospital, and among those who thronged the windows to witness our arrival were several German Red Cross nurses—the first European women we had seen in Mesopotamia. On landing we were formed into line and required to march a distance of two miles to the cavalry barracks in which we were to be quartered, while our kit was taken up by the ship (and looted on the way) to a point close to the barracks. We could have been landed there ourselves, but no doubt the Turks (or their German mentors) wished to exhibit us to the townspeople after the manner of a Roman triumph; Baghdad, in its long history, had never before this war seen British prisoners. The commandant apologised for the guard of soldiers

with fixed bayonets who accompanied us, and explained that they were necessary to protect us from the anger of the populace. As a matter of fact, we found the inhabitants extremely civil, and a large proportion of them were Jews and Christians who would have expressed their sympathy openly if they had dared. On our part we tried to seem as cheerful as possible, and one German officer who witnessed the procession remarked afterwards : “ What extraordinary people you English are ; you marched through the town with the air of having captured it ! ”

Our route lay along squalid streets and in and out of the crowded bazaar, through which the present New Street had not then been driven. As we passed the Citadel, we saw at one of the barred windows three Englishmen—Cree, Tod, and Dexter—who had been arrested in Baghdad when the war broke out, but had managed to make their way out of Turkey via Mersina. They had then joined our army in Mesopotamia and had been unlucky enough to take part in the defence of Kut. On being captured with the rest of the garrison, they were charged with breaking a parole alleged to have been given during their former captivity. They were awaiting trial in Baghdad, and their fate was in suspense for many months, but eventually they were acquitted and treated as ordinary prisoners of war.

The day after our arrival we were agreeably surprised to be told that it was pay-day. Each British officer was given a month's pay, but only (in accordance with one of the misguided provisions of the Hague Convention) at the very inadequate



rates received by Turkish officers of corresponding rank. Astonishing to relate, part of the money was paid in gold. We never saw any more during our captivity, but the commandant at Baghdad knew that in the country to the north and west, through which we were to march, the inhabitants—chiefly Beduin—would not look at paper money, and without gold we should starve. Some of the gold had been German coin, which during the war was reminted in considerable quantities with a Turkish inscription.

The enemy was determined, for political reasons, to put Indian native officers on an equality with British, and the commandant tried to make us all take our meals together. This arrangement the Indians, with their caste, resented much more than we did, and if the object was to stir up feeling between the two races or to rally the Muhammadan officers to the cause of Turkey it certainly had the opposite effect. As part of the equalising plan, a *subadar-major* was paid as a British major, a *subadar* as a captain, and a *jamadar* as a lieutenant, though all these officers are junior to the latest-joined British subaltern and receive far lower pay. They scored heavily at the time, but their satisfaction was mingled with a haunting fear that the amounts overpaid would eventually be recovered from them by a zealous accounts department in Simla.

A few officers who managed to persuade the guard at the gate of the barracks to take them for a walk in the town immediately made for the American consulate. Mr. Brissel, the Consul, was most hospitable, gave them more gold, and promised to do all in his power for our men on

their arrival ; but he was very pessimistic about the treatment in store for them, and declared that we ought at any cost to have cut our way out of Kut. When the commandant heard of this interview he was extremely angry and stopped all further visits to the town, except to the hospital. We were told that the Turkish government had refused to allow either the staff of the American embassy at Constantinople or American consuls to see us, because all prisoners were being dealt with in accordance with the Hague Convention. It is fairly obvious that in that case there could be no objection to an American inspection : the fact was that if the Consul had visited us he would have had to be allowed to see the men on their arrival, when he could not have endorsed the Turkish claim that the Hague Convention was being observed.

Some of us were sent to one of the hospitals, which before the war had been an orphanage managed by some French Dominican Sisters. These ladies were forbidden, under pain of imprisonment, to see any prisoners, but they contrived, time after time, to visit the hospital from their convent across the road, and they were perfectly indomitable in their efforts for us, and later on for our men. After the British occupation of Baghdad, electric light and fans were installed in their buildings, and a grant was made to their funds, in recognition of their self-sacrificing devotion.

In Baghdad, for the first time since being taken prisoner, we were counted ; indeed, we were counted several times, and always with a different result. Recording our names was still more difficult.

Throughout our captivity no Turk could ever understand the distinction between a surname and a Christian name, or how one's father's name could be the same as one's own. A staff officer managed at last to complete a list which, though entirely useless as a means of identifying us, no doubt satisfied the Turkish War Office, for whom it was compiled.

Two days after we reached Baghdad it was rumoured that a Russian force, which had marched through Persia from the Caspian under General Baratoff, was at Khanaqin, on the frontier, only ninety-five miles away. Again the chance of a dash for freedom presented itself, but we could not be sure that the news was true, and without a map the prospects of success were negligible. Our allies were, nevertheless, sufficiently near to make a raid on Baghdad possible, and the Turks were very anxious to get us away. We were equally keen to leave our cramped and insanitary quarters and depart for a cooler climate, and so we welcomed the announcement that we were to start by train for the north. As a penalty, however, of moving, we were warned that we should only be allowed to carry a small quantity of kit beyond the rail-head. The commandant undertook to hand over to the American Consul for storage anything which we could not take with us, but even at this stage we did not place much faith in Turkish promises, and most of us decided to sell, for what they would fetch, all surplus clothes and most of the food we had brought from Shumran. They were eagerly bought up by Turkish and German officers and Jewish traders, but of course, as it was a forced

## CHAPTER II

### THE DESERT MARCH

FROM now onwards the Turks made no attempt to feed us. For the next six weeks we were left to buy and cook our own food, an arrangement that had advantages, though supplies were in many places very scarce. At Samarra, where we remained for four days, we were able to buy mutton, dates, cucumbers, unleavened bread, a limited number of eggs, and occasionally sour milk and butter from the Beduin. At other places we were less fortunate, and once for several days on end we could get nothing but flour and dates. The Turks professed to supply our orderlies with rations, but frequently neglected this elementary precept of the Hague Convention, and the men would have starved if we had not been able to buy food for them.

Samarra was an important place on the Turkish line of communications from Asia Minor to Baghdad. All kinds of war material, even guns and motor-cars, were floated down the Tigris from Mosul on rafts known as *kelleks*, which are identical with those to be seen on sculptures at least three thousand years old in the Assyrian galleries at the British Museum. They consist of a framework of light poplar poles covered with brushwood or timber, and supported by inflated goatskins or sheepskins tied in rows. The ordinary *kellek*

contains about 300 skins, is about 25 feet square, and will carry from five to ten tons ; a few containing as many as 600 skins were built to carry heavy artillery. A couple of great oars complete this strange craft, but when the current is swift steering is difficult, and collisions with rocks are frequent. Punctures in the skins are repaired by double-flanged pieces of wood like collar-studs. During the war the rafts were broken up when they reached Samarra, the wood being used as firewood and the skins deflated and sent back by donkey to Mosul.

While we were at Samarra, about 3,000 of our men who had marched on foot from Shumran to Baghdad arrived by train. We were forbidden to visit them, but contrived to speak to one or two, and to give them some money ; it was all we could do to help them. They were worn out and emaciated, and some were half naked, with nothing left but shirts. They told a terrible story of their journey to Baghdad. On the long night marches, men who fell out or lagged behind were flogged or ridden down by the Arab escort, however ill they might be (and some had, as mentioned in the last chapter, started with unhealed wounds). A few camels and donkeys followed each column to carry the sick, but the supply was utterly inadequate, and only those who could pay the drivers handsomely ever got a seat on them. No other transport of any kind was provided, and water was often unobtainable for many hours on end. Men who were so exhausted by enteritis, dysentery, or sheer fatigue that even brutality could not urge them forward, were stripped of their clothing and left, naked and starving, to die and feed the jackals.

Several laggards were killed outright by the escort, and there was one fully authenticated case of a dying man being buried alive. The night's march was often prolonged far into the day, and when it was finished the prisoners were suffered to lie down till evening, without shelter of any kind from the burning summer sun. The guards neglected no opportunity of pilfering their small possessions, and men whom they did not rob were driven by hunger to barter their clothing, and even their boots and water-bottles, for food. When rations were issued they consisted usually of a scanty allowance of the mouldy biscuits already described, but on several days there was no issue at all. Firewood was never supplied. Those who had money tried to buy food direct from the Beduin, but the guards formed a ring and would allow no purchases except at extortionate prices from themselves.

The march was continued for several weeks beyond Samarra, until the working camps in the north were reached, and even worse things were witnessed by officers left behind at Baghdad when they went on later. In the words of a British government report which records their evidence, "the sights they saw, all along the road, hardly bear telling. Parties of men were lying under any shelter they could find, in all stages of dysentery and starvation; some dying, some dead; half clothed, without boots, having sold everything they could to buy a little milk. Only here and there had an attendant of some kind been left to look after them. Generally there was no one but the Arab villagers, who mercilessly robbed them, or the officer of the local police-post, who stared

indifferently and protested that he had no authority to help. The dead lay unburied, plundered and stripped of their last clothing. Right across the desert these sights were repeated; dying men, in tens and twenties, lay awaiting their end. Some had to wait long. Many weeks later there was found a group of six British soldiers and a dozen Indians who for three months had lain on the bare ground, subsisting solely on a few scraps thrown to them by Arabs or passing caravans. The Englishmen had been fourteen: eight had died, and of the survivors only one was able to crawl to a place where there was water. It begins to be evident how it came about that of the men who surrendered at Kut more than three thousand, British and Indian, have never been heard of at all.”\* It is doubtful whether any prisoners of war in modern times, not actually massacred, have endured more than the prisoners of Kut. The sepoy, though more used to the heat, suffered almost as severely as the British troops, but they were full of pathetic faith in the ultimate power of the British *raj* to protect them even in captivity. An example of devotion to duty which it would be difficult to beat was given by the mess havildar of an Indian regiment, who insisted on carrying with him on the march three heavy books containing the accounts of which he was in charge.

It should never be forgotten that these men were seen by the Turkish Minister of War himself, Enver Pasha, whose plea that their ill-treatment was due to his subordinates will not bear examination. While we were at Samarra he passed

\* Parliamentary Paper, Cmd. 9208, November, 1918.

through in a motor-car on his way to Baghdad, and on his return a few days later he overtook thousands of our men. He must have known that hundreds were dying, and their death lies at his door: he could have stopped the march with a wave of his hand.

At Samarra we were ordered to get ready for a road journey of 400 miles to the next rail-head at Ras al Ain; we were to go on ahead of our men and never to see them again. As far as Mosul, a distance of 180 miles, we kept close to the Tigris, like Xenophon's Ten Thousand, but Xenophon went up the left bank while we followed the right. His was much the better choice, for between Mosul and Baghdad the river receives not a single tributary on the right bank, and access to the river on this side is difficult. The country east of the river, on the other hand, is well watered by streams from the Persian mountains, and food is much more plentiful; but the route is longer, and no doubt our captors avoided it in order to place the Tigris between us and the Russians.

Transport was hard to find, and the commandant ordered that each officer's baggage should not exceed 20 kilograms. As blankets, cooking-pots and a certain quantity of food were included in this allowance, there was little room for spare clothing, and the small supply we had brought with us from Baghdad had to be cut down still further. One of our party, fresh from Pass Mods., drew attention to a remarkably similar incident in the experience of Xenophon's men a little further up the river.\*

Even to carry these reduced kits was difficult, and

\* *Anabasis*, III., iii., 1.



it was decided that the British officers should start first, leaving the Indian officers to follow when more animals could be collected. We were promised one pony, mule or donkey for each officer to ride, and one between two for baggage. No transport whatever was provided for our orderlies, the Turkish idea being that even if they were ill they should walk the whole way and carry their own kit. Nor was anything like the promised number of animals forthcoming. For every five officers and their orderlies and kit only six turned up, and the majority of these were diminutive donkeys. They were commandeered, probably without payment, from the inhabitants, and no doubt a good many others were surreptitiously removed by their owners before we could lay hands on them. The result was that nobody could ride more than a small fraction of the distance. To make things worse, hardly any of the animals had stirrups or even bridles, a single chain being the connecting link between the rider and his mount's head, and nearly every one had a pack-saddle, with a knife-like crest. Riding astride was torture, and the Arab method of sitting sideways hardly more agreeable, so that a ride, although a relief from long hours of marching, was not exactly a pleasure. Nor did any of us attempt the Arab feat of lying asleep on a mule or donkey, with one arm clasped round his neck. It must be added that we were compelled to use many animals which had terrible sores. The carcasses and skeletons by the roadside throughout our journey showed that it is the custom of the country to work beasts until they drop. Kindness to animals is supposed to be one of the Arab's strong points, but

as he thinks it wrong to kill an animal to put it out of its pain his idea of kindness works out badly in practice. It is remarkable, too, that he does not seem to know what a bad smell is ; carcasses are met with in all stages of decay, even close to villages.

Our escort consisted of about twenty Arab gendarmes, whom we had every reason to hate. Some of them who were unmounted annexed for their own use the best of the ponies provided for us, and the commandant, also an Arab, declined to interfere. His men were, indeed, "on the make" throughout the march. Like the guard over the rank and file, they bought up supplies and sold them to us at much higher rates, and even the commandant did not hesitate to line his pocket in this way when he got a chance. Worse still, they neglected no opportunity of looting our kit, and the commandant refused to punish one man who was found with an officer's blanket under his saddle. Boots were especially in demand, and several pairs disappeared. It was absolutely necessary, if one took them off, to tie them to oneself.

We British officers (except about twenty who were too ill to march) left Samarra about seven o'clock on the evening of May 20. The business of pursuing, retaining, sorting out, allotting, retrieving, loading and mounting our miscellaneous collection of animals took some hours, and our tempers were all thoroughly exhausted by the time we moved off. The climax of our woes was a sandstorm, which filled our eyes, noses, ears and throats with nauseating dust and turned the landscape into a monochrome of sepia. Fortunately no one knew of the tremendous journey ahead.

When the storm was over we marched steadily, in pitch darkness, keeping discipline in our own hands, and halting only for ten minutes every hour to collect stragglers and give an opportunity to adjust the loads on the animals. The commandant, with typical Turkish apathy, subsided more and more into the background, leaving everything to be arranged by our own staff officers.

Our route was a mere track across a plain covered with grass and small bushes. Night-marching, arduous at the best, was especially trying for men who had done very little marching of any sort for six months and had been on reduced rations for most of that time. When at last we bivouacked at 1 a.m. we had all had rather more than enough, and after drinking deeply from a pool which we could not see, but which tasted sweet enough, we quickly fell asleep. Only four hours later dawn broke, and we were aroused by shouts of *Yallah, yallah!* from our guard—their invariable way of ordering us to get a move on. We then found that the water we had enjoyed so much in the dark was stagnant and filthy, but as there was nothing else to drink we had some more of it. Now came the task of loading up the baggage animals. To our horror, a number of them were missing. The Arabs from whom they had been hired had followed them and driven them back to Samarra while we slept. The intervals between rides became longer than ever.

Near Samarra one leaves the immense alluvial plain which constitutes lower Mesopotamia, and the ground becomes less flat. Baghdad, 350 miles from the sea in a straight line, is only 105 feet above

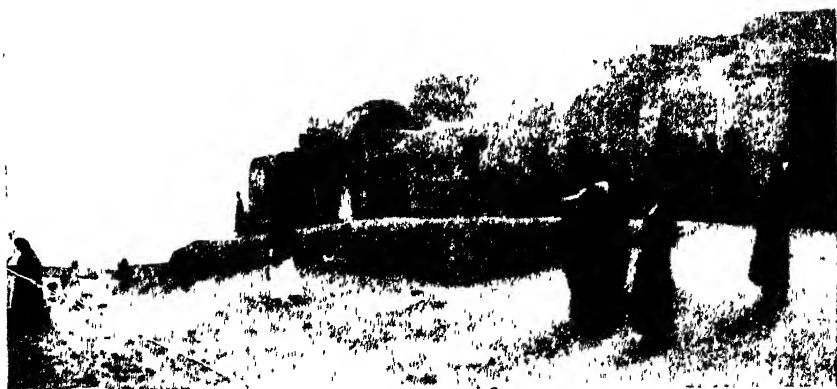
it; Mosul, though only 210 miles from Baghdad, is nearly a thousand feet above sea-level. The country from Samarra to within a few miles of Mosul is a rolling plain, broken in some places by low sand-hills and covered by scrub or grass, with many red poppies and other wild flowers, but no trees of any sort. There are occasional camps of Shammar and other nomad Arabs, on whom we were dependent for supplies of food, but hardly any villages or even patches of cultivation. We touched the river bank at only half a dozen points on the way to Mosul, and springs and streams were few and far between. On this second day we kept going for eight hours, only striking water near the end of the journey. The sky was cloudless, the glare from the plain trying, the scenery odiously monotonous. We longed for "rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." When we reached Tikrit at 1 p.m. we had covered thirty-five miles in eighteen hours, and some had walked every inch of the way. Considering our condition, the heat, and the shortage of water, it was remarkable that everybody got through.

Tikrit, once an important city, and the birth-place of Saladin, was now a mere village. Many houses were empty, but instead of being given shelter from the fierce sun we were ordered to bivouac on the pebbly beach. This was used incidentally as the town refuse-heap, and swarmed with flies, which in Mesopotamia not only pester but bite. The inhabitants, too, did their best to make us realise what it was to be "sincere and precious guests," for they spat and threw stones and insults at us, stole as much of our property as they



*Photo by Major P. C. Saunders*

KUT, DURING THE SIEGE



TIKRIT



could lay their hands on, and committed far worse outrages on the rank and file who marched through later. When Tamerlane sacked Tikrit after a long siege, it is recorded that instead of erecting forthwith his customary pyramid of heads he distributed the garrison among his army, to be tortured to death. On the assumption that they resembled the inhabitants whom we met, we hesitated to condemn him.

In a house on the river bank we found two sick officers belonging to the party which had left Shumran before us. This building was called the hospital, but there was no doctor, nurse or food. A raft containing several German motor-cars had just arrived on its way downstream, and the German officer in charge promised to take one of the two "patients," who was very ill, back to Baghdad. He was duly placed on board, but in the middle of the night a hue and cry was raised by the Turkish authorities on shore, who thought he had escaped! When they discovered what had happened to him they fetched him back from the raft, and he had to remain in the "hospital." In spite of this set-back the German officer was very civil, remonstrated with the Turkish commandant about our treatment, and did his best to help us. The same may be said of nearly all the Germans whom we met on the journey. They despised their Moslem ally and seemed to think it their duty to protect us, as fellow-Europeans, against him. Whether they did this solely out of consideration for us, or with an eye to teaching the Turk that in the German empire soon to be established in the East his position would be one of vassalage, is a matter of opinion. Unfortunately, the instructions which they gave

usually became a dead-letter when their backs were turned, or after we quitted the camp in which they were present. Nevertheless, the small proportion of the British rank and file who survived Turkish captivity mostly owed their lives to German supervision of the working camps and German care of the sick. General Townshend was misinformed when he stated that the appalling mortality among our men was due to the Germans, not to the Turks.\*

Provisions were plentiful in Tikrit, and we laid in a stock for the journey. We were also advised to purchase goatskins for carrying water, the spring water being very brackish and the river for some distance being unapproachable on account of the Jabal Hamrin, a line of hills which forms a precipice along the bank. Goatskins should be well seasoned before use, but we were inexperienced buyers and new ones were foisted upon us. A new goatskin not only leaks, but, to quote the expert opinion of Sir Richard Burton, "communicates to its contents a ferruginous aspect and a wholesome though hardly an attractive flavour of tanno-gelatine." We were able to hire a few more donkeys, but had to pay for them out of our own pockets,

\* In "My Campaign in Mesopotamia" he writes: "Prior to leaving Kut I warned Khalil Pasha that our men were not able to walk. I said if they were forced to march they would die in such a climate, at such a time of the year, and in such a state of health. I have his letter in return in which he guarantees that every care should be taken of the men, and that they should be transported by steamer to Baghdad and in carts beyond. I ascribe the blame and guilt of these cruelties to the German staff officers with the Turks, and would exonerate Khalil Pasha entirely." It is not clear why Khalil Pasha should be forgiven for breach of his written promise. The German staff officers were under his orders, not he under theirs.

and the provisions and skins took up so much room that most of us had to walk nearly all the way to Mosul.

After a rest of thirty hours—far too short for those who had badly blistered feet—we left Tikrit, and on the first stage out we marched from 7.30 p.m. to 2.30 a.m., and again from 6 to 9 a.m. We halted for the day at one of the small guard-houses which the Turks scattered through upper Mesopotamia; but as it had been used as a stable at no distant date most of us preferred the sweltering heat of the courtyard or the roof. There was long delay before we were allowed to enter; the commandant, who had ridden on ahead and arrived before us, had gone to sleep on his camp-bed and we were not allowed to wake him.

Here and elsewhere our greatest difficulty was to find fuel with which to cook food. Firewood could not be obtained for love or money from the inhabitants, and officers and orderlies had to collect what sticks they could, not only at the halting-places but during the last hour or two of each march. The spectacle of a grimy senior officer picking up twigs as he went along reminded one painfully of the tattered and unfortunate old men who collect cigarette-ends in city streets.

When we moved on next evening, the commandant announced that the Arabs in this part of the country were unfriendly to the Turks, and at his request we dispensed even with our brief hourly halts. About midnight several shots were fired, and our escort started galloping about in all directions. We should have been an easy prey, but this small display of force was quite enough to keep the



Beduin at a distance. Two long night marches brought us to the Tigris again at Qalat Sharqat.

Sharqat is on the site of Asshur, which was the first capital of the Assyrians, and took its name from their God of Battles. It was founded about the eighteenth century before Christ, and is finely placed above the river, on a hill called the Mountain of the Moon, the highest point of which is occupied by the solid brick shrine of the god. German archæologists made extensive excavations here before the war,\* and for half a mile we had to feel our way through them in the dark. We were repeating very ancient history. Captives of the King of Assyria must have filed through the same streets; but it is safe to say that they were more miserable than we, for most of them were doomed to penal servitude for life, and the leaders were, according to the bas-reliefs, usually flayed alive or impaled. Our own treatment was not brutal; it was merely apathetic. The commandant had arrived at Sharqat earlier in the evening, but he did not trouble to meet us, nor did our escort know what to do with us. After standing about for over an hour we were placed in the courtyard of a small barrack on the river bank, but after only four hours' sleep we were all turned out on the plea that the building must be cleared for Enver, who was expected that day in a motor-car, on his way back from Baghdad, and we had to carry our kit into a filthy stable half a mile away.

\* To carry away the débris the Germans had installed a light railway, and in 1917, after the British occupation of Baghdad, one of our spies who saw it brought in to G.H.Q. the alarming news that the railway from Constantinople had reached Qalat Sharqat! At that time the Turkish rail-head was actually about 250 miles away.

KURD SWIMMING ON INFLATED SHEEPSKIN



At Sharqat milk and eggs were brought across the river to us by Kurds, who supported themselves on inflated goatskins. This is a curious operation. The swimmer doffs all his clothes and puts them and his cargo on his head. Then he wades out from the bank, pushing the skin (or two skins tied together) in front of him. When the water is about three feet deep he lies down on the skin and begins to paddle like a frog. If he carries a rifle, he has his work cut out to keep it dry, and he must move warily lest he lose his balance and burst the skin. Again Xenophon supplied a precedent, for he mentions that at Coenæ, not far from Sharqat, "barbarians" brought food across to the Ten Thousand in exactly the same manner, though in the opposite direction.\*

The eternal *Yallah, yallah!* summoned us to continue our march the same evening, but as we had slept for barely four hours on each of the two preceding nights we flatly refused to go on until the next morning, and having by this time established a certain moral superiority over the commandant we got our way. Inspired with this success, we asserted ourselves still further by fixing the maximum rates we would pay for food; our slender funds were disappearing at an alarming rate, and it was absolutely necessary to protect ourselves against the extortions of the inhabitants and of our escort. This policy, unlike the similar efforts of Food Controllers, was successful in keeping down prices without curtailing supplies.

Up to this point the horizon had been a series of sand-hills of deadly monotony, but next day we began to have fine views of the mountains of Kurdistan,

\* Anabasis. II.. iv.. 28

range behind range, which form part of the great northern massif of the Middle East; while on our right, across the river, stood the great observatory tower of Nimrod, which aroused the wonder of the Ten Thousand. Our own immediate prospects also improved. At Hammam Ali, on the river bank, food was plentiful and cheap (four eggs for a penny), and awnings made of camel-hair were supplied for about half our number—a provision without precedent. The village contains sulphur baths, which are visited by people from Mosul, but as some of the occupants were unprepossessing we preferred to bathe in the Tigris. Even the river water is strongly flavoured by the sulphur streams which flow into it; but we had to drink it, whether we wanted a “cure” or not.

On the ninth day from Samarra we reached Mosul, where a rest of several days was promised. We were tightly packed into a few small unfurnished rooms of a barrack or prison, which we shared with a number of Kurdish and other chained captives, and in which the sanitary arrangements were filthy beyond description. Bathing had been the one redeeming feature of the march, but here all water had to be brought into the prison in skins and very little was available for washing. One privilege, however, was vouchsafed to us which after our scratch meals of the last few weeks seemed priceless. We were permitted to go out to two small restaurants, where we could actually eat off plates. The cooking was greasy, but it is almost safe to say that none of us ever enjoyed food more. Wonderful also to relate, we were charged the same prices as Turkish officers.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM THE TIGRIS TO ASIA MINOR

MOSUL was the last point on the Tigris that we touched, and we had now to prepare for a journey of 225 miles westwards to the rail-head at Ras al Ain. Our commandant announced that no food would be obtainable during the first five days of the march, and he allowed us to visit the town, escorted by a gendarme, to lay in supplies of flour, rice, vegetables, dried figs, raisins and salt. The Arabs on the road had refused paper money, and even wanted commission for changing gold into silver or large silver coins into small ones. Our first visit, therefore, was to the Imperial Ottoman Bank, for the purpose of changing into coin, if possible, some of the five-lira notes we had received in Baghdad. The manager was civil, but had to confess that there was no cash of any sort, whether coin or paper, in the bank! Some difficulty was experienced in getting even the Mosul tradesmen to accept paper money, but it was a criminal offence to refuse it, and an appeal to the nearest policeman was usually effective.

At Mosul the Turkish Red Crescent gave each officer a post-card on which to write home, and these duly reached England—the first communication from us which had got through since Kut was invested six months before. We were told we might acquaint our friends that our

final destination was Angora, but this turned out to be incorrect.

For the journey from Mosul to Ras al Ain a few carts drawn by ponies were supplied, as well as a number of mules and donkeys. We managed to hire extra carts and animals with our own money, and the convoy also included a carriage for the commandant, who from time to time was gracious enough to invite two or three of us to share it with him. In the event, most of us were able to ride or sit in a cart for one hour in every two. When ground had been lost through a break in the harness, which contained more rope, string, and other Oriental devices than leather, the ponies broke into a trot or even a gallop to catch up the convoy, and at such times a seat in one of the springless carts on the hillocky track was not undiluted joy. Still, an hour in a cart was, on the whole, less tiring than an hour on a pack-saddle without reins or stirrups. The carts were equally popular with the soldiers of our escort, some of whom were unmounted, and the drivers also sold places to the Arab owners of the riding animals. To make room for these gentlemen, our orderlies were told that they must walk the whole way, but this we would not permit.

We left Mosul on the morning of June 4. Henceforth water was plentiful, though sometimes brackish, and food was not so difficult to obtain as some interested persons in Mosul had led us to believe. For the first hundred miles the country presented the same deserted appearance as the region along the Tigris, and we pushed on as fast as we could by the usual long night journeys. On

the third night and day we beat our own record by covering nearly forty miles in seventeen hours, but the night was turned into day by long lines of grass fires on both sides of us. These fires are started every year to burn up the old grass and stimulate the new crop, and they are a magnificent spectacle. By their light we caught sight of Dr. Sven Hedin, who was making a tour of Mesopotamia and passed us in a motor-car on his way to Baghdad. Did he use the influence he had with the Turks to secure better treatment for the British and Indian rank and file?

A halt of twenty-four hours was permitted at a military post called Demir Qapu, on the banks of a stream which provided sweet drinking-water, bathing, and plenty of fish (caught with a worm, a bent pin and a piece of string). Other food was scarce, but we bought, for the first time, Turkish cigarettes — a great improvement on the Arab tobacco which we had been compelled to smoke in Kut during a great part of the siege (until even it was exhausted and resort was had to tea-leaves and grass) and since the surrender. The camp contained a number of Germans on their way to Mosul, one of whom was good enough to arrange for the punishment of one of our guard who had struck a British officer. While his face was being soundly smacked, the delinquent stood at the salute—a remarkable revelation of the length to which discipline is carried in the Turkish Army.

We now entered a country of rich cornland, which only wants a decent government and cheap transport to make it one of the granaries of the world. So it once was, and the mounds with

which it is dotted bear witness to the density of its ancient population, while the many battles fought here prove how it was coveted by ancient Powers. Sufficient rain falls to make artificial irrigation unnecessary, and if only the country could be freed from the blight of Turkish rule there is little doubt that the settled population would increase ; many Kurds who come for winter pasture would stay, and Beduin Arabs, though less reliable husbandmen, might also be induced to become cultivators on a larger scale.

We began to pass a number of deserted villages. An empty village in Turkey does not necessarily betoken a calamity, for a large proportion of the people retain the nomadic instinct and will move to another district on small pretext, especially if the houses become dilapidated. "Orientals build, but never repair." These villages, however, were not in ruins and had been occupied at no distant date. The mystery was solved when we came upon wells full of human bones, and one of our guards told us that we had reached a district previously inhabited by Armenians, all of whom—men, women and children—had been killed or driven into the desert a year before.

At Nisibin, about 150 miles from Mosul, we found refreshing shade in a valley containing numbers of poplar and willow trees—the first trees of any sort which we had seen for fully three hundred miles. Several sepoys who had gone over to the enemy from the Kut trenches, and had since been interned, were now attached to our party. They were in rags, and did not seem to have derived much benefit from their treachery, nor did they receive a



warm welcome from us. We were also joined by an unfortunate Russian prisoner from the Caucasian front, who was half starved, had not a scrap of kit, and could speak no word of any language but his own, which none of us understood.

The last day's march was one of the worst, for we were attacked by swarms of sand-flies, and it was with great relief that we reached Ras al Ain. We had covered the 225 miles from Mosul in eight and a half days, including two whole-day halts. Though the heat was tropical, at not one of the halting-places, nor at Ras al Ain itself, was any shelter from the sun provided. But of course our discomfort was negligible in comparison with the sufferings of the rank and file.

We stayed two nights at Ras al Ain. We had expected to join up with the first party of officers, but they had gone on by train a couple of hours before our arrival. We did not regret their departure, for it would have been difficult to buy food for double our own number. The colony of Circassian immigrants who had settled in the district some years earlier, among the mounds which cover the ruins of Greek, Parthian, Roman and Arab cities, had perished of disease, and a few months before our arrival many thousands of Armenians who were encamped here had been massacred. Nobody was left to cultivate the fertile soil, and supplies of fresh food were scarce and expensive. We were forced to patronise a shop which sold a variety of bad tinned provisions, and the Turkish proprietor did such a roaring trade that he packed up his entire stock and followed us to the next rail-head.

The British medical officers in our party were now told they were to remain at Ras al Ain in order to look after the rank and file who would be arriving shortly, and whom the enemy intended to employ either on railway construction or on metalling the road to Diarbekr. This attempt to provide our men with medical attendance was a welcome sign that the Turkish War Office was beginning to realise its responsibility to them. Unfortunately, the doctors were not properly distributed. There were ample to go round, but for a long time many parties of our men were left unattended, and our own party of officers had no doctor for the next two months.

The Turks also took from us at Ras al Ain most of our Hindu and Christian orderlies, on the plea that the privilege of attending officers must be reserved for Moslems. We appealed against this decision to some German officers who were passing through, and on their intervention the men were restored to us, but as soon as the Germans had left they were again taken away and did not return. The same Germans told us of the death of Lord Kitchener and of the "great German naval victory" off Jutland, but news through such a channel was received somewhat sceptically.

We left Ras al Ain by train on the morning of June 12, and every hour or so passed a remarkably solid and well-built station, of a German pattern, but very few other habitations. At Jerablus, close to Carchemish, we crossed the Euphrates by the steel bridge 850 yards long which had recently been completed. Thus we quitted Mesopotamia, and without shedding a tear.

In the station on the west bank Moslem orderlies were mustered on the platform and asked whether they would like to work on the railway. Two of the deserters who had joined us at Nisibin were the only volunteers, and it is not unlikely that their motive was less fondness for the Turks than a desire to get away from ourselves.

Thirteen hours in the train brought us to Aleppo, where we hoped to get some of the comforts of civilisation. The first thing that happened was certainly encouraging: hackney carriages were in attendance to convey us to our quarters. After our experience of the last few weeks this seemed the height of luxury, but any hope that Khalil Pasha's promise of treatment as "sincere and precious guests" would now at last be fulfilled was quickly dissipated. We were taken, apparently at the whim of the drivers, to various small hotels, which showed some outward signs of Westernisation; but thirty-four of us found ourselves in three tiny rooms, containing beds for about one-fifth of our number, on the first floor of a filthy house. Those who avoided the beds and lay down on the roof chose the better part, even though our kits did not arrive and we were obliged to sleep without blankets. No food was to be had. Our orderlies were marched off from the station by themselves, and we did not see them again until we left Aleppo.

Next morning we asked for a meal, but none could be got in the "hotel," and we were not allowed to go out into the town. Seeing bread on sale in the street, we asked the vendor to come up to us, but the hotel proprietor would not let him in and tried to sell us bread at double the price. To

defeat him we threw money down to the man, telling him to throw loaves up to us on the roof, and he and the loaves rose splendidly to the occasion. During the morning we were allowed to carry part of our kit from a building not far away, where it had been dumped the previous night ; the rest had been taken off to other hotels and was only found after a prolonged search. Our efforts to obtain a meal were unsuccessful until the afternoon, when five officers at a time were permitted to visit a restaurant in the town, escorted by a gendarme. It was past four o'clock when some of us got our first meal of the day, which also proved to be the last, nobody being allowed to leave the hotel again. The food was tolerable, but we found from a comparison of the Turkish and English menus that we paid double the prices charged to the inhabitants ; no doubt the proprietor had to remunerate our escort for the privilege of our patronage. By a refinement of extortion he declined to give us any change, and we were obliged to go without it or eat up to the full amount of a currency note.

The next day also, nobody was allowed to go out for a meal until the afternoon. We asked for the American Consul, but of course he was not sent for. Seeing our commandant in the street, we called out to him, and he promised to come up to us ; but during the whole time we were in Aleppo neither he nor any other Turkish officer came near us, and we were left to the tender mercies of an Arab corporal. When eventually we were allowed to visit the restaurant, we found two British officers there who had been captured some months before

and were being detained in Aleppo until they paid their hotel bills. As they had no money and none was forthcoming from the Turkish government, their sojourn seemed likely to be prolonged indefinitely.

At eleven o'clock that night we were awakened to receive three liras each, in paper, from a man said to be a representative of the Turkish Red Crescent Society. This was unlooked-for generosity, and we were not surprised to learn afterwards that the money really came from our own government. Nor did we notice until we had signed them that the receipts were for payment in gold; Turkish paper had already depreciated heavily, and somebody made a handsome sum out of this little trick. The same night, at 3.30 a.m., the hotel proprietor demanded and received payment for the rooms we occupied, and we were bundled into the street to walk to the station.

Our train climbed for about six hours through rich rolling downs of red loam, dotted with olive groves, but we got no view of the Mediterranean, although its north-eastern corner was only twenty-five miles away. At Islahiyah we left the train in order to cross the Amanus Mountains, locally known as the Giaour Dagħ, the tunnel through which was not completed until shortly before the armistice. The sun was now no longer oppressive, but tents had been put up for us, probably on account of the presence of many Germans. As further tokens of civilisation, a Turkish doctor paraded us, inspected our tongues, and persuaded as many of us as he could (the matter was quite optional) to give him our clothes to be steamed in

a portable disinfecter of which he was excessively proud. Carts were provided for the journey, but we were required to get out and walk for three hours uphill through the pass; unfortunately it was pitch dark and we could see nothing of the scenery. The road had been newly constructed to take the place of the coast road (through the Syro-Cilician gates), which was under the fire of our fleet, but the surface had been cut to pieces by steel-tired motor-lorries.

By the roadside we passed three corpses of Armenians who had evidently been murdered. They probably belonged to a large party that we had seen marched out of Islahiyah on the previous day. According to the evidence collected by Lord Bryce's committee, vast and incredibly foul concentration camps were formed in 1915 at these rail-heads, where Armenian exiles were detained for months and died by thousands of hunger, exposure and epidemics.

On the other side of the defile the road lay through woods of fir, oak, olive and eucalyptus. The descent was very steep, but our carts, though they had no brakes, took it at a reckless pace and a couple of them were upset. However, we all reached the rail-head at Mamureh in safety. Thence we had an eight-hour journey by train across Cilicia, an alluvial plain which with its corn and cotton is an example to Mesopotamia—or was so until the Turks drove out all the most useful sections of the population. The hot season is equally unpleasant, but once we were clear of Cilicia the heat was no worse than that of a summer in the South of France. It was therefore with comparative

THE AMANUS



calm that we bore the theft one night of half a dozen sun-helmets, a loss which in Mesopotamia would have been disastrous. They probably found their way to German soldiers, whose equipment for the tropics was much inferior to that of British troops. At Gulek Boghaz, where we left the train once again, there was a German commandant, and we were well looked after, really for the first time in the whole of our journey.

To cross the Taurus, a journey of 42 miles, we were packed into Austrian motor-lorries, with Austrian drivers but Turks under instruction beside them. The road passes over low bare foot-hills and then up a valley by many hairpin bends, and at the Cilician Gates the gorge is so narrow that the track is supported by a revetment over the stream and will take only a single file of traffic. During the recorded history of this pass, Hittites, Assyrians, Persians, Arabs, Mongols and Turks have used it on their way west to conquer Asia Minor or invade Europe; the Greeks (including Alexander), the Romans, the Byzantines and the Crusaders have gone through in the opposite direction to continue the eternal struggle between East and West; and in the Great War it was thronged with troops marching to Syria and Mesopotamia to defend Turkey against attacks in her rear. It would seem, however, that its history is now finished, so long at least as our present civilisation endures; for the railway, completed in 1918, does not use the Gates but pierces the Taurus in a tunnel further east.

On the other side of the pass were large camps of men who were completing the railway, and we noticed some English sailors who had been taken



prisoner in the Dardanelles and were working on the tunnels; but we could only exchange a few words with them. In the evening we descended through wonderful scenery to the rail-head at Bozanti, and here we found a further reminder of the Dardanelles campaign in a German canteen at which we were allowed to buy some of the English cheese and bully beef abandoned in Gallipoli.

A thousand of our men who had survived the march from Kut to Asia Minor were to make this journey across the Taurus a few months later. There were no motor-lorries for them. What happened is described in the British Government report already quoted:

“The way in which an operation of this kind may be mismanaged in Turkey is almost incredible, familiar as the details become by repetition. It is a fact that these men were sent off without food for the journey, and that no provision was made for them at any point of the road. It was, perhaps, a worse experience than that which a few weeks before had seemed the limit of possible suffering. The men were forced forward by gendarmes with the butt-ends of their rifles, till of sheer inanition many dropped and died. A few managed to take refuge in certain German and Austrian military camps in the Taurus; but the main body was somehow beaten and driven across the mountain range. It was like one thing only—a scene from Dante’s *Inferno*; the word was that of an Austrian officer who witnessed it.”

After a cramped railway journey of sixteen hours we reached Konia. The carriage doors were kept



THE CILICIAN GATES LOOKING NORTH

bolted, but we were no worse off in this respect than the Turkish troops in the numerous military trains we met. Throughout the war, as we were informed, all Turkish trains going east were locked until they had passed the Amanus, to prevent desertions. Imagine British troops being kept under lock and key on their way to the front!

At Konia we were allowed to go for meals to the *Hôtel du Chemin de Fer de Baghdad*, kept by a French lady, who could not have done more for her own sons than she did for us. She produced roast beef, potatoes, beer and whisky, necessities of life which we seemed not to have tasted for years, and we *lay down* in a hot bath which recalled vaguely some previous existence. Then another weary twenty-four hours in the train brought us to Eskishehr, the junction for the Angora branch. At this point our Arab commandant, who had escorted us all the way from Samarra, left us without adieux,\* and we parted from him without regrets. With even greater satisfaction we saw our Arab guard accompany him.

At Eskishehr we were only 160 miles from Constantinople and Europe, but we had to turn eastwards again for a final railway journey of twelve hours to Angora. Here we hoped that our travels would end, but it was announced that as soon as transport could be collected we were to go on 140 miles by road to Kastamuni, north of Angora, a march of six or seven days. In the meantime we were led to a large stone barrack on a hill outside

\* Unlike the commandant of another party, who solemnly asked the senior British officer to write him a testimonial!

the town, designed as an agricultural college, but like so many other things in Turkey never used for the purpose for which it was intended. A very Turkish feature of the building was that while it contained a complete installation of pipes and taps, the nearest water was a stream half a mile away, and although a cart eventually brought up drinking-water there was none left over for washing. The officers of the first party which had preceded us from Shumran were already quartered here, but having told the commandant what they thought of him were being "kept in" like schoolboys in disgrace. We were more tactful, and to their disgust were allowed to visit the stream daily to wash ourselves and our clothes, not before they needed it. We benefited also from the other party's painful experiences of the mattresses and quilts with which the rooms were furnished.

On June 25 the first party left Angora in carts for Yozgad, about 120 miles to the east, and we ourselves set out for Kastamuni three days later. Carriages—not unlike victorias with most of the springs broken—were hired for a few senior officers, and the rest of us were given carts to which we had to carry our kits down the hill. A new commandant who now took charge, an elderly cavalry captain, proved courteous and considerate, and thanks to him the journey to Kastamuni was not altogether unpleasant. Nobody had to walk more than he wanted, and we were well over two thousand feet above sea-level and could travel by day without discomfort from the heat; indeed, bivouacking at night, with an insufficient supply of blankets, was bitterly cold. Shelter was offered in

the villages ; but it seemed better to be frozen than eaten. Supplies, except of meat, were fairly plentiful, and our commandant was at great pains to help us to obtain them ; cherries and apricots were especially abundant and delightful. Finally, our route lay not across a desert, but through cheerful valleys dotted with orchards and fields of ripe corn (which seemed certain to be ruined for lack of labour to reap it), and over hills covered with pine and fir trees.

We crossed the Ulgaz Dagh by a pass 6,400 feet above sea-level, and although it was now midsummer there was snow on one or two of the summits. On July 4 we reached Kastamuni and so completed our two months of travel. We had covered nearly 2,000 miles from Kut—the longest land journey, perhaps, that prisoners of war had made since the days of the Roman Empire. Forty of the officers who had quitted Shumran on May 10 had been left in hospitals (so called) en route, and our party now contained only seventy-five officers and twenty-five orderlies. Outside the town we were halted and handed over to a detachment of a hundred soldiers, who came out to meet us. We were split into two nearly equal divisions, one of which was escorted to a school building on the hillside above the town, while the other, to which I belonged, was taken to a row of Greek houses lower down, which had been cleared for us.

## CHAPTER IV

### A PRISONERS' CAMP IN ANATOLIA

KASTAMUNI lies about 2,750 feet above sea-level, and some fifty miles from the south coast of the Black Sea. A stream runs through the town, and the valley is full of cornfields, vegetable gardens and orchards, in which cherries, plums, apricots, peaches, apples, pears and quinces grow prolifically, though little care is given to their cultivation. Above are steep and stony slopes dotted with clumps of pine-trees, but for the most part covered only with juniper bushes and thin coarse grass—indifferent pasturage for the cattle, sheep and goats. These bleak hills were once well wooded, but the Turk, just as he never repairs a building, rarely plants a tree, and though there are plenty of trees in Anatolia the region round a town is nearly always bare. One obstacle to afforestation, besides the lethargy of the inhabitants and of the government, is the enormous number of goats, in whose company young trees cannot live.

The town is the capital of a vilayet of the same name which includes much the same area as the ancient Paphlagonia. The valley is isolated by forests and high mountains and lies far from any military or trade route, but strange to say (or perhaps not strange, considering how few are the regions of the world never trodden by British



troops), we were not the first English soldiers to come there. It is on record that in the year 1101 about five thousand Crusaders under Raymond of Toulouse, including some Englishmen, tried to escape from Angora to the Black Sea and halted at Kastamuni. Most of them were massacred in the town, but about three hundred, after terrible hardships, succeeded in reaching Sinope.

As elsewhere in Anatolia, the houses, with few exceptions, are mere wooden frames filled in with sun-dried bricks or rubble. The upper storey, roofed with red tiles, usually projects picturesquely over the lower and is set at an angle to it, doubtless in order to allow the Moslem ladies behind the lattice to look up and down the street—one of their few diversions. The ground floor is often a cow-house, into which the cattle find their own way at dusk from the surrounding hills. The streets are narrow and covered with cobbles, and recalled descriptions of an Elizabethan town, but, of course, the many minarets, and the domes of twenty-three Turkish baths, gave the place as a whole an unmistakably Oriental appearance, while the cry of the *muessin*, taken up from mosque to mosque, was a reminder every few hours that we were still in the East. At night the town was plunged into complete darkness, except during the Fast of Ramadhan,\* when all the minarets were ringed with

\* Throughout Ramadhan, which begins with one new moon and lasts until the next new moon has been *seen*, a Moslem may not eat, drink or smoke between sunrise and sunset. The first sight of the second new moon is therefore eagerly awaited, and men are even sent up into the mountains to report the earliest glimpse. In these decadent days, however, a large number of the population do not observe the Fast. Indeed, they eat more



tiny lamps. A Byzantine castle dominating the valley contained two eighteenth-century guns, which were discharged on the frequent occasions when a fire broke out in the town, and also at sunset on each day of the Fast. During a total eclipse of the moon which occurred while we were there, not only these cannon but all the rifles and machine guns in the place were fired at her "to prevent the devil from swallowing her," and some of the inhabitants were quite convinced that it was owing to this demonstration that the shadow did in fact pass.\*

The great bulk of the population were Moslems who claimed to be Ottoman Turks, but their physiognomy varied enormously, and many of them must have been descended not from the Osmanli clan but from Phrygian, Cappadocian and other early inhabitants who accepted Islam after the Turkish invasion. The photograph opposite, taken at Kastamuni by the late Sir Mark Sykes, shows a distinctly European type, which he attributes to the Gallic invasion under Brennus in the third century before Christ. Besides Turks, the town contained some thousands of Greeks, but this term denoted, even more than elsewhere in Anatolia, a religion, not a race, and the majority spoke only Turkish. There was nothing Hellenic about them,

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than usual; for, in addition to their ordinary meals during the day, they have an extra large one, to which friends are bidden, immediately after sunset, for the purpose of bolstering up the theory that everybody has been starving since sunrise. Just before dawn, too, people promenade the streets, beating drums, to rouse the Faithful to eat before the day's fast begins.

\* A similar tradition obtains on the Tigris, but there the moon is threatened by a large local fish.



KISTAMUNI PEASANT

Reproduced from Sir Mark Sykes' "The Caliphs' Last Heritage," by kind permission of Messrs Macmillan & Co., Ltd

and they were probably descendants of the original inhabitants, who were converted to Christianity in Byzantine times. The number of Greeks was increased during our incarceration by deportations from the coast of the Black Sea, whence hundreds of men, women and children, barefooted, in rags, and with enormous bundles on their backs, were brought in under escort. Almost all the Armenian inhabitants had been driven out of the town before we arrived, their property being confiscated on the ground that it had been "abandoned." Only one or two who were useful, including the bank manager, were allowed to remain.

On the day after our arrival we were inspected by the governor-general of the province and by the military governor of the town. They promised to do everything in their power to make us comfortable, and laid stress on the fact that they were preparing a football for us "stronger and bigger than any English one."

The houses which we occupied contained beds and bedding (which was actually clean), but very little other furniture. This was just as well, for several officers were packed into each small room. The gregariousness of a prisoner-of-war's life is one of its most trying characteristics. Still, it was luxury to have a roof over our head and beds to lie on, after months in the open on ground as hard as iron. The worst thing about the houses was that they contained no provision whatever for washing. The commandant put up a notice which laid down that "officers will wash not less than once a fortnight and not more than once a week," and we found that the periodical visit to the Turkish bath

which these words were intended to enjoin upon us was the extent of the ablutions of many of the inhabitants, including, to all appearances, the commandant himself. Another thing which jarred was the announcement that we were required to pay from five to ten shillings per day for each room to a contractor who had provided such furniture as there was—a rent which reduced us to insolvency and would certainly in a year have bought the house and its contents outright. When we protested, we were told that we could go and live in the barracks free; but we had had some experience of Turkish barracks on the march.

For food we went to an adjoining house which we called the restaurant, and which seemed at first the acme of comfort. Regular meals, with tables and chairs, were such novelties that we did not trouble much at the outset about either their price or their quality. After a time, however, the oily Turkish cooking began to pall, and the food to deteriorate, while the quantity was cut down to a minimum, and anyone who asked for more was regarded with as much displeasure as *Oliver Twist*. Our impatience increased when it was announced that we were to be charged thirty-five piastres a day (5s. 10d.) each. After much argument, the contractor agreed to provide three exiguous meals for twenty piastres (3s. 4d.), but even this figure was far too high considering that at that date beef cost only a little over twopence a pound, bread and fruit a penny a pound or less, and eggs were three for a penny. To make our financial position still worse, we were informed that we should no longer be paid at the rate drawn by Turkish officers of correspond-

ing rank, which we had received in Baghdad in accordance with the Hague Convention, but should be given only seven or eight paper liras a month (twenty-three to twenty-seven piastres a day), and the amount overpaid at Baghdad had to be refunded. The reason given for the reduction was that Turkish officers whom we had captured were paid at these lower rates. This turned out to be true, but Turkish officers were not charged rent, were not compelled, as we were, to give more for board and lodging than the amount they drew in pay, and did not, as we did, have to feed the orderlies because their rations were totally inadequate.\*

Our commandant was an elderly, very dirty, unshaven, sometimes drunk, shuffling, golosh-wearing, dug-out lieutenant-colonel, named Taufiq Bey. He seemed on the whole to wish us well, so far as that was consistent with his own interests, but he was hampered by enemies in the town who, in true Turkish fashion, threatened to report him if he treated us too considerately. Being a typical Turk, he was ignorant and distrustful, and some of his ideas seemed rather childish, though they gave us plenty of amusement. *Omne ignotum pro mirifico*. He seized and sent to Constantinople for examination, on suspicion of being seditious,

\* A Turkish captain whom I met after the war told me he was splendidly housed and fed in a prisoners' camp in India, drew in addition 120 rupees per month, and returned from India with savings of £160 in his pocket. Of course, the currency in which he was paid made all the difference. With his own army he would have received at most £12 per month in Turkish paper—a sum worth in 1917 not more than £2 sterling. He was therefore drawing four times as much while in British hands as his own government would have paid him in the field.

certain coats of arms which an officer was painting. Maps were anathema to him, and he even tore down some perfectly harmless sketches from a bedroom wall, remarking excitedly: "You think I am not wise, but I am." Fortunately, he soon forgot his own orders. When he issued a decree that lights must be out by half-past nine, we obeyed on the first night, we put them out at ten on the second, and thereafter we put them out when we pleased. We were back in an ill-managed nursery, with its alternations of indulgence and random severity. During one period Taufiq would issue no instructions on points submitted to him, because he was not on speaking terms, for the time being, with our senior officer, who had been rude to him.

In spite of his indolence, the Turkish officer is a proud man, resenting any insinuation that he is less enlightened than an Englishman. When a new order was promulgated which did not suit us, it was sometimes sufficient to express astonishment and to point out that that sort of thing was "not done" in England, and the matter was dropped. Nevertheless, Turkish civilisation could not be slighted with impunity. On one occasion a small fire broke out in our quarters, and after a long interval the town fire brigade arrived. Its equipment was a hand pump of pre-Victorian pattern, borne on the sturdy shoulders of four Turks, who came puffing up the hill. We all laughed, but one officer who laughed louder than anybody else was sentenced to a week's detention in his room "for insulting the Ottoman Empire."

Our guards were aged Anatolian peasants who had been called back to the colours from their

villages at the outbreak of war. They were armed with still more ancient rifles, to which rusty bayonets were permanently fixed, and they were posted at the doors of our houses and at each end of the street. Like the men we had taken prisoner in Mesopotamia, and the peasants we had met on our journey through Asia Minor, we found them good fellows enough. The Turkish private soldier is brave, patient, hardy, generous, faithful, good-natured, fairly honest. He is extremely dignified, and would not think of cringing to a superior, whether of his own or any other race. He is a man of few words, but not devoid of a sense of humour. He lacks energy, enterprise and intelligence, but he was vastly more congenial to us than either the Christian inhabitants or his own officers, whose blood is more mixed, who are more often dishonest, and who are frequently deficient in their men's soldierly qualities. With most of our guards we rapidly became great friends—as soon, in fact, as they discovered that, though mad, we were harmless.

The commandant knew no European language except a few words of French, and none of us could speak much Turkish. Orders were therefore communicated through interpreters, and, as their own knowledge of English was limited, the orders, when they appeared on the notice-board, were a constant delight. Here are some examples :

“Officers cannot talk to anyone except themselves, strong punishments will pursue swiftly.”

“Let everyone pay the price in the bazaar and let them pay all their money to Usnu [the contractor] who is not a robber.”

"If any officers are not obeying the centeries the centery will have permission to strike with his steak and with his rifle." [Our senior officer protested against this order, and it was withdrawn.]

"Everybody is obliged neither to cook food nor to have any sort of fire in the rooms where they live and lie, as a very slight carelessness as regards fire, cleanliness and neatness may be the cause of great dangers; it is desirable to act always with precaution and care. It is rather good to consider the heaviness of the legal penalty that may impend for a damage caused by a lack of precaution and care. If a fire starts it goes. Therefore don't smoke in bedrooms for God sake."

"Surely officers need not chivy *bints* in the bazaar, and officers educated in London could know better. When officers go for a walk in charge of a *posta* [guard] they shall not go to the front or the *posta* gets behind, in which case the *posta* has orders to shoot or remonstrate with the culprit. Officers are allowed to bath and bazaar and footer. Why not go about properly dressed? Surely no hat or in the hand is not properly dressed. When you go to the market please go by together."

"It has been taken to my notice that English officers never stop kicking up a shinty in their rooms. Cards will be stopped. [Of course, we disregarded this, bridge being one of our chief ways of killing time.] Let us not play cards or kick up any more shinty. You shall behave civilised. In future great supplies of liquor and cognac will not be drunk by our order as the floor of the house will go through. In which case the officers concerned cannot hold Turkish authorities responsible if they meet death. Also punishment must be given. Liquors will be drunk sufficiently and soberness will be kept."



“Officers will always tidy the room. Why choose the pig-sty? This is also a punishable affair. The chief cause of the uncleanness are the dogs which many of you have procured. There is no article in the regulations permitting dogs to be kept by prisoners. Moreover, these dogs show no capacity of receiving any training, because they are wild and ill-natured dogs, and only they are filthy to look at with the uncleanness they cause. It is required to do away with these dogs beginning with to-day.” [We ignored this, and kept not only dogs but gamecocks, choughs, goats and even a small bear.]

The question of discharging our liabilities to the contractor soon began to give trouble, and we discovered that the commandant was not only stupid but corrupt. On pay-days he sat at one table issuing our pay, and the contractor at another to receive it in part settlement of his bill. Any attempt by an officer to secure some of his pay for himself, to enable him to buy clothes, tobacco, soap and other necessaries, at once started a furious three-cornered argument. The commandant supported the contractor and tried to hand over our pay *en bloc* to him, but most of us refused to sign for it unless we were allowed to decide for ourselves what proportion we would retain for other purposes. It was fairly obvious that the commandant had a financial interest in the contract, and our senior officer warned him that he should lay the facts before the American Ambassador and the Turkish Minister for War, at the earliest opportunity. This threat seemed to frighten him, and at last he admitted that we were under no

obligation to use the restaurant, and might make our own arrangements for food without relinquishing our furnished quarters. About two-thirds of us immediately decided to provide our own meals, and we formed ourselves into messes, with the orderlies as cooks. The commandant put many obstacles in our way. For the first two days we had to cook in the open, the use of the kitchens being forbidden "because of the danger of fire." We were told that we should find it impossible to buy food in the town during the winter, and were warned that once we left the restaurant we could not return to it—a threat which did not frighten us. Visits to the town to make purchases were also restricted, but opposition gradually died down when it was realised that we were determined to feed ourselves. The change was never regretted. The cost of living was much less than at the restaurant, and the food infinitely more palatable. Nor did the strikers benefit only themselves, for the food provided for those who remained at the restaurant improved greatly, no doubt to prevent further defections, though in the winter the charge was increased in spite of the fact that the summer rate had been justified because it would remain unaltered when the cost of food rose.

Early in January a letter was received from a Swiss committee of the International Red Cross who were inspecting prisoners' camps in Turkey. Much to our disappointment, Kastamuni was too far from the railway for a visit, but they asked us to represent any grievances to them in writing. We seized the opportunity to raise the question of rent, and a few days later, long before the committee

could have received our letter, the commandant notified us that rent had been charged for the houses "by mistake." No refund, however, would be made, and we must go on paying a rent slightly lower for the use of the contractor's furniture, although its cost was covered several times over by the sums he had already received. Two officers thereupon placed their furniture in the street, by way of protest. They were banished to the other party as a punishment, but their action had its effect, and eventually we were allowed to buy furniture elsewhere if we liked, though the commandant inflicted various petty annoyances upon those who did so.

During the summer the number of officers at Kastamuni was increased to 133 by 58 fresh arrivals, among whom, besides old friends from Kut, was a Flying Corps officer who brought us news from Egypt up to the middle of June, including the truth about the battle of Jutland. Two officers died during July, and the Turks did little to save their lives. In the first case the doctor did not come until the third day after he was sent for, and in the second he saw his patient on the latter's arrival at the hospital in the early morning, but did not appear again until after his death eighteen hours later, the hospital staff declining to send for him "because they did not know his address." A third officer who was brought from Angora in thin clothes and without blankets died of exposure the day after his arrival. These three officers, together with three orderlies who died subsequently of typhus, were buried in the Greek cemetery. Wooden crosses over the

graves were quickly stolen and eventually we erected tombstones and built a wall round them with our own hands. When the camp was evacuated the Greek community said that it would be their privilege to look after this small graveyard, but unfortunately they themselves did not long survive the armistice.

The arrival of a British doctor in August probably prevented other deaths, though he was hampered by lack of medicines and instruments. The Turkish hospital being not only badly staffed but insanitary, bug-ridden and starved of supplies, he opened a hospital of his own in one of the houses, with the commandant's full approval, but before it could be used the commandant closed it without giving any sort of reason. We were all inoculated for cholera, but injections for enteric, which was far more prevalent, were unobtainable.

The climate of Kastamuni suits Europeans excellently, and in general rapidly revived those of us (and they were in a large majority) whose health had suffered during the siege or the long march. The summer was not often uncomfortably hot; the winter, though cold, was sunny and bracing. Snow fell in January, February and March and lay on the mountains round about from September to July, but with wood stoves in every room we managed to keep fairly warm, and sawing up trees was good exercise. Of rain we had very little except in May and June, but when a heavy shower did fall the road outside our houses, leading down from the hills into the town, became a furious and cleansing torrent.

On our arrival we had been promised many

privileges if we gave no trouble, and we hoped to visit the shops and go out for exercise freely on giving our parole for the period of absence from our quarters. In this we were disappointed, for we were not allowed to pass the sentries at each end of the row of houses without an escort. On the subject of exercise the commandant issued many orders and counter-orders, but as a rule he allowed country walks fairly frequently, and very enjoyable they were, especially in the early spring, when the pine-woods and valley meadows were carpeted with crocuses, primroses and many other wild flowers. Twice we took greyhounds out to course rabbits, and parties who went out birds'-nesting, butterfly hunting, sketching, or for geological research, achieved some useful results as well as fulfilling their primary purpose of killing time. On these walks and expeditions we were a severe trial to our guards, who loathed exercise and followed us with cries of *Yawash* (slowly)—a word which became as hateful as *Yallah* had been on the march.

In the autumn we hired a field on which each of the two parties played football three times a week, and this went far to keep us fit and cheerful. At first we had only a stuffed ball which was not strong enough to kick, and we played a sort of Rugby, with overhead throwing instead of kicking. In October Association balls were obtained from Constantinople and used for Rugby also, but the ground was very hard and stony, and touching with both hands had to be substituted for tackling until we found a piece of good turf two miles away on which real Rugby could be played. Both games never failed to draw spectators from the town, and

an open-air boxing tournament astonished the natives still more.

Most of us had brought one or two books from Kut, in spite of the restrictions on the weight of baggage, and others arrived in parcels. All books were put into a common library, which eventually numbered several thousand volumes. Unfortunately, an order was received that all literature in parcels was to be despatched to Constantinople for censorship, so that when the parcels were opened we had the mortification of seeing long-awaited books for a moment, and then waiting upwards of six months until they were delivered to us. Among the volumes sent back for censorship were an English dictionary and a Bible.

What we craved for more than anything else was reliable news. We subscribed to the French edition of a Constantinople newspaper, but although the frequent anglophobe outbursts were not less instructive than amusing, they gave us no definite indication of the progress of the war.\* We were not allowed to receive newspapers from England, but a copy of the weekly edition of *The Times*, which was awaiting examination among a new batch of parcels, was smuggled out, and the wrapper removed intact and carefully preserved. The disappearance of the packet was noticed, but the hue and cry for it died down after a time. When a fresh issue arrived with the next lot of parcels, the commandant's staff put it specially on

\* Sometimes, however, we could read between the lines. For instance, the fall of Baghdad was not announced, but we had no doubt it had fallen because fighting was mentioned in a place which we knew was further north, though hardly any of the paper's ordinary readers in Constantinople or Anatolia would know.

one side for condemnation; but the original copy, though by this time in rags, was placed in its wrapper, taken into the parcel room, substituted for the new copy, and solemnly confiscated by the commandant; and so the little game went on. These papers were many months old when they arrived, and they did not always come in proper sequence, but they were a priceless boon. Other news occasionally reached us on the wrappings of parcels and by means of cryptograms and allegorical messages in letters, but the allegories were sometimes so obscure that no two prisoners could agree about the meaning! Eventually one officer managed to arrange with a correspondent in England a code by which secret messages could be sent to and fro without difficulty.

The monotony of our life, though often relieved by the whims of our gaolers, was trying, and we all got bored with one another's society, conversation and mannerisms, and depressed by the feeling that we were ignominiously out of the war. It was absolutely necessary to conquer apathy and drown thought with some sort of work, and many varied forms of occupation, besides reading, were devised. Several people started carpentering to add to the scanty furniture supplied by the contractor; a boot-repairing shop kept three of us busy continuously; and one officer had the temerity to go into business as a tailor. Others found less laborious employment in the concoction, from such ingredients as were available, of various exotic liqueurs; the most popular was a sort of cherry brandy made from Greek cognac and the local cherry. To lay these distillations down to mature would have indicated rank pessimism

about the duration of the war, and they were usually consumed within a week.

Music was supplied chiefly by the other party, who established a mandolin orchestra. This had to rely at first entirely on scores written from memory, but it was the mainstay of an excellent variety performance on Christmas Day. The town band, not to be outdone, honoured us by playing outside our quarters on several occasions, but we were not capable of appreciating Turkish music and its efforts were discouraged. Our orchestra gradually expanded into a band of twenty instruments, which included violins and clarionets bought in the town, and banjos, drums, 'cellos and a double bass manufactured in our carpenter's shop by improvised methods which were marvellously effective.

Culture was also promoted, or striven for, by lectures. We had among us, of course, many who followed civil professions before the war, and papers were forthcoming on such diverse topics as astronomy, locomotives, pottery, rubber-growing, tea-planting, fishing, shooting, dogs, birds, the Hittites, the Old Testament, Xenophon, parliamentary elections, heraldry, drawing, boy scouts and law, in addition to lectures on military subjects which, in the circumstances, fell rather flat. The commandant was very suspicious of these proceedings, and at first insisted on attending them, though he could not understand a word of English. For a time he actually stopped all lectures, but eventually he allowed them to continue on a promise from our senior officer that nothing political would be discussed. Little did the commandant know that three topical magazines, including one written



entirely by our orderlies, issued fortnightly numbers in manuscript, which were quietly circulated. They would have got us into serious trouble if they had fallen into his hands, for they were full of witticisms, both literary and pictorial, at the expense of himself and his compatriots.

A chapel was fitted up in a large room of one of the houses, and books and vestments were obtained from the American Embassy in Constantinople. The Anglican, Wesleyan and Roman Catholic chaplains who had accompanied us from Kut were at first not allowed to leave their quarters—the Turks being apparently afraid of their trying to proselytise the inhabitants, but this very unnecessary restriction was removed before long. The following order issued just before Christmas is a quaint example of the punctilious precision with which our hosts took reprisals upon us for any fancied wrongs of their own prisoners in camps in Egypt and India :

“ As our prisoner officers and men have not been allowed to come together in one place for worship on our feast of Bairam, the Headquarters-General orders accordingly that prisoner officers and privates interned in our country will not be allowed to come together in the same place for the services which are to be held on Christmas day. The fact is thus informed : you are required to act accordingly.”

Of course, the only man really affected by this pin-prick was the chaplain, who had to duplicate the services. On Christmas Day we received a generous present of £40 from the Pope, who asked the Roman Catholic chaplain to distribute it without distinction between creeds. A large party of

the children—both Greek and Moslem—who lived near us were entertained, and some of them ate more food than they usually got in a week. Thereafter when we walked in the town we were followed by urchins crying “Engleez,” “Bakhshish,” “Ekmaq,” (bread), “Chocolat.” When Easter came we were invited to the service in the Greek church. In accordance with custom, some verses from the story of the Resurrection were recited from different pulpits in Greek, Turkish, Russian, and French, and for the first time in the history of the building the English version of them was read—by our Church of England chaplain.

Still more interesting was a *zîkr* of the Qadir dervishes, which we were allowed to attend one evening. We entered their mosque without taking off our shoes, and were given chairs in a sort of balcony which gave a good view of the proceedings. Kneeling in a circle upon the polished floor were about twenty men, draped in black, who swayed rhythmically backwards and forwards, ever faster and faster, some chanting verses from the Koran, others repeating sonorously *La ilahah illa Allah* (There is no god but God). The *zîkr* is designed to produce mechanically a frame of mind in which the soul is completely lifted up from worldly things and becomes one with God. That it did have an ecstatic effect was evident from the climax, when the shaikh produced skewers and stuck them through the unflinching cheeks of several of the dervishes. The rites ended with a prayer, and we then adjourned to the shaikh's room for coffee. He concluded a remarkable evening by swallowing glass, to prove his own abstraction from carnal cares.

Mails arrived with fair regularity and usually took not more than six weeks on the journey from England, but we found that our own letters often did not reach their destinations, or were badly mutilated by the Turkish censors. Parcels were delayed to an extraordinary extent. Many were over nine months in transit, and a large number never arrived at all. At least a thousand must have been despatched to us every month, but in some months not a single one was delivered. It was impossible to say whether the delays and losses took place west of Constantinople, as the Turks alleged, or after the arrival of the parcels in Turkey. Several which reached Kastamuni devoid of addresses were annexed by the commandant without any attempt to identify the owners, but on the whole very few were tampered with, and the contents were examined—very perfunctorily—in our presence. A delivery of parcels was much the most exciting event in our existence. First came the anxiety whether one would receive any at all; somebody might get twenty of various dates, somebody else none whatever. The order in which they came was also a matter of pure chance; a parcel despatched in July might arrive before one which left in the previous January. Then came the suspense about the contents: would they consist solely of tinned meat, which nobody wanted while fresh meat was so plentiful, or would they include the shaving-soap which one had written for many months before, and which, like many other articles of daily use in England, was quite unobtainable in Kastamuni? Our chief need was clothing. We were in rags when we reached Kastamuni, and for

months no clothes arrived except some extremely tight suits of striped cotton, purchased in Constantinople with British funds, and said to have been made out of curtains owing to the shortage of cloth. These weird garments gave us a coon-like appearance, and were extremely chilly as autumn advanced. Fortunately, warmer clothing arrived before the weather became really cold.

Our efforts to bring our grievances to the notice of the American Ambassador in Constantinople proved fruitless, and some of the letters addressed to him were returned by the Turkish authorities with the intimation that they must be in a particular form—of which we were not notified! We were never visited by the representative of any neutral Power. In February, 1917, however, after we had been at Kastamuni over six months, a colonel from the Turkish War Office arrived to inspect us, and at last we had an opportunity of appealing from our moth-eaten commandant to higher authority. The first thing the inspector did was to order the soldiers guarding us to remove their bayonets (no easy matter), and he then went thoroughly into all our complaints with our senior officer. During his examination of the contractor's accounts he discovered that the commandant was a beneficiary, and a stormy scene followed; according to the dramatic narrative of the staff officer, who wanted his job, the commandant went down on his knees to the inspector and pleaded to be forgiven. But he was dismissed and imprisoned, the contract was terminated, and the restaurant closed. The commandant had also taken commission from the only Turkish bath which we were

allowed to visit, and much better baths (though still far inferior to the London variety) were now thrown open to us. Various other orders were given by the inspector to increase our comfort. More orderlies were to be sent from Angora, so that every two officers might share one. Books manifestly innocent were to be handed to us when they arrived. Restrictions on walks and games were removed. Finally, our senior officer was to send him a sealed letter every month in which any further causes of complaint were to be stated.

The greatest boon we derived from the inspector's visit was a new commandant, named Fathah Bey. Having spent three years in Germany and married a German wife, he spoke German well, and one of us was able to talk to him without an interpreter—no small aid to smooth relations. He was a kind-hearted old man, anxious to show that his ideas were European, and much less suspicious than his predecessor. During one of our afternoon concerts he sent a thrill through our little community by introducing several Greek and Armenian girls as dancing partners. Most of us had not even spoken to a woman for over a year.

As another proof of his enlightenment, Fathah gave officers who had technical knowledge an opportunity to use it. A survey of the town was begun, the engines at the technical college were overhauled, and plans were prepared for a new foundry and smithy. Several weeks were spent in repairing a motor-lorry which had been lying derelict in the town since the beginning of the war, but this job was only undertaken on the com-

mandant's express promise that the lorry should not be used for military purposes. As might perhaps have been expected, it was no sooner in working order than the army authorities took it over, but there was just time for our motor experts to ensure that there should be another and a final breakdown before many miles had been run.

Towards the end of the first year of our captivity prices began to rise with alarming rapidity. The heights to which tea, sugar, kerosene, and other imported goods soared was doubtless due to their scarcity, but the general advance was caused by the depreciation of the Ottoman currency. Treasury notes, first issued about a year after the outbreak of war, gradually declined in value until in 1917 a gold lira could be exchanged for six paper liras, in spite of the severe penalties for such a transaction. It was impossible to obtain change, and to meet the difficulty the government issued notes for twenty, five and two and a half piastres and one piastre (2d). The two last-named notes bore views of the Dardanelles and Kut, to commemorate the Turkish victories over British arms. For fractions of a piastre gumless postage stamps were made legal tender, and after that we rarely saw coins of any sort. In June, 1917, the government made an effort to stop profiteering by fixing maximum prices for food, but most articles were unobtainable in towns at these rates; the shops simply put up their shutters, and it was only with the utmost difficulty, and by subterranean methods, that supplies could be had at all. The higher price of kerosene compelled us to go to bed earlier, and

in March we “saved daylight” by advancing our watches.\*

The pay we received from the Turkish government was augmented by a gift of five liras a month from our own government, but the total did not nearly suffice to cover our expenses. To make up the deficit, most of us arranged for money to be sent from home. Unfortunately, when these remittances were converted from sterling into liras, the value of the Turkish paper money was fictitiously enhanced, through the machinations of the exchange office managed by the Turkish government and a ring of Constantinople bankers. At a date when remittances from home were reaching us at the rate of one paper lira for fourteen shillings, a paper lira could be bought for three shillings and fourpence.

Another method of raising the wind, and a very remarkable one, was to give cheques to the Kasta-muni tradesmen. We had no cheque-books, but unstamped pieces of paper sufficed, and one officer obtained as much as £500 by this means. The willingness of the inhabitants, both Moslem and Christian, to cash cheques drawn on an enemy bank, by enemy prisoners of whose financial resources they knew nothing, was really amazing. Some of us would not have obtained credit in London so easily, and after the armistice those who were repatriated via Alexandria were informed by Messrs. Cox and Co. there that cheques by officers below the rank of

\* The Turks have a daylight-saving system of their own. By Turkish time it is always 12 o'clock at sunset, and clocks and watches have to be set daily. The day is therefore a minute or two longer than twenty-four hours from December to June, and a minute or two less than twenty-four hours from June to December. We ignored this system.

lieutenant-colonel could not be cashed. It is true that the Kastamuni tradesmen gave us a very bad rate of exchange and stood to make a handsome profit on each transaction, but they had no guarantee that the signatures would ever be honoured, and their faith seemed still more notable when we found that the cheques were not cleared at once through a neutral country, as they might have been, but were kept for presentation after the armistice, when a Kastamuni Greek arrived in London with a sackful of them on his back. By the time some of them reached the banks, the officers who had drawn them were dead or had closed their accounts and were difficult to trace. In 1923, £650 was still due on these cheques, and I am glad to say that the British Treasury then agreed to pay this sum to the holders. To repudiate the debt would have been lamentable; for surely a more striking tribute was never paid to British integrity. The benefits to us were beyond price. Had the rank and file in Turkey been able to raise money in the same way, the mortality among them would have been far lower.

That the tradesmen were willing and even eager to give us liras for sterling cheques, and to keep the cheques till the end of the war, proved that they believed in the eventual triumph of British arms. What, then, kept Turkey in the war? A prisoner was not the best person to gain an insight into this problem, but one or two facts impressed themselves upon us. There was no public opinion in Turkey, and no organisation to challenge the authority of Enver, Talaat, and the Committee of Union and Progress. The Christians, who had constituted a large proportion of the population, were profoundly disaffected,



but the Armenian section of them was wiped off the map, and the Greeks restrained by fear of a like fate. It is true that there were many deserters from the Turkish Army, but the bands of brigands which they formed did not attain very large proportions during the war. Unquestioning respect for authority is even more deeply ingrained in the Turk than in the German, and the nation as a whole continued to follow its leaders mainly through force of habit, reinforced to some small extent by Moslem fanaticism. Nor has this servility been uprooted by the removal of the Sultan and the institution of democracy. In the rules of the Popular party in the new Grand National Assembly at Angora, it is laid down that "in the course of discussions only the leader and his lieutenants may speak in the name of the party. Other members will approve and support from their places, and by brief utterances, the words of their chiefs."

## CHAPTER V

### PREPARATIONS FOR ESCAPE

SOON after we reached Kastamuni a roll-call twice daily was introduced, to make sure that no one had run away, and we were individually photographed, to aid the pursuit of anyone who did. But our new commandant was not content with these precautions. Three weeks after he arrived, he announced that orders had come from Constantinople to stop all games and walks and to keep us in close confinement, but he added that if we would promise not to attempt escape he would, on his own responsibility, continue our existing privileges, and even extend them. Our senior officer, though he gave no order, urged us to give the promise. He argued that the escape of a few was of no real use to the allied cause, and would make the lot of the remaining prisoners harder; that to get clear away was, in any case, hardly feasible, owing to the position of Kastamuni in the interior of Anatolia, hundreds of miles from any allied force or neutral frontier; that if escape should ever become possible the promise could be withdrawn; and that in the meantime the health and comfort of the majority ought to be considered.

Most officers accepted these views and gave the promise; not unnaturally they deemed themselves entitled, or even by military discipline compelled,

to follow the advice of their superior officer. But eleven of us refused. We were not satisfied that escape would always be impossible, and we declined to tie our hands. True, the parole, if given, could be withdrawn should a chance to get away occur later, but a withdrawal would obviously put the Turks at once on the alert. Moreover, the promise would make it unnecessary for the enemy to guard us, and would therefore be tantamount to assisting him. On the other hand, the commandant had said that refusal to give parole would lead to an increase in the number of sentries. Such an increase would alone, we held, justify our refusal, for we should be detaining in Kastamuni a number of the enemy who would otherwise be released for duty at the front or on the lines of communication. If each prisoner kept even two men to guard him, he would be accounting for as many as he could reasonably expect to kill if he were in a front-line trench.\*

The eleven non-jurors were informed that they would be confined in a separate house, forbidden to communicate with anybody else, deprived of all exercise and visits to the bazaar, and eventually sent away to some garrison town where yet harsher penalties would be imposed. Obviously these threats, however terrible, did not alter the merits of the argument, and we refused to change our decision. Strange to relate, though perhaps quite typical of Turkey, nothing whatever happened. We were not locked up or even segregated, none of our privileges was withdrawn, and we were

\* That prisoners credited with an intention to escape could keep large numbers of the enemy busy was abundantly proved in Germany (see p. 180).

treated in no wise differently from those who had given parole. This meant that our refusal did not in any way prejudice, as we had feared it might, our chance of escape. It also seemed to indicate that the "orders from Constantinople for more severe treatment" had been invented by the commandant in order to obtain our parole and so assist his sleep at night. Some months later, when walks were restricted without any apparent reason, a number of those who had given parole withdrew it, as a protest.

The question came up subsequently at another camp, the senior officer of which got a message through to the War Office in London asking for a ruling. After several months the reply arrived that the War Office considered a promise not to attempt to escape opposed to the traditions of the service. The point had arisen in previous wars, and it seems strange that the King's Regulations contained (and still contain) no pronouncement on this matter. An Expeditionary Force routine order eventually forbade the giving of parole, but prisoners captured before its issue could only look for guidance to their senior officers, who should never have been burdened with the responsibility of deciding such a question of principle.

Not all the eleven officers who refused to give parole had any intention of attempting to escape. The prospects of success seemed, indeed, extremely remote. Ineboli, on the Black Sea, was only fifty miles away in a straight line, but it would be impossible to reach it in a night, and immediately the disappearance of any of our number was discovered the beach would be so closely watched as to put escape

by boat from that locality out of the question. There was, of course, always a chance of a Russian raid. Several had already taken place, and that the Turks feared others was shown by their energy in expelling Greeks from the coastal districts and in improving the coast defences and observation posts. But it was impracticable, even by means of our secret system of communicating with London already mentioned, to get in touch with the Russians within a reasonable time, and it was therefore quite futile to endeavour to arrange a rendezvous at which a vessel would pick us up. No hope of any such outside help could be entertained, and we should have to rely entirely on our own resources. With this postulate, the only outlets which seemed in the least degree feasible were: (1) the Russian lines far to the east; and (2) some point on the Black Sea sufficiently distant to appear an unlikely objective. Both routes involved a journey of some hundreds of miles over mountainous country, with great uncertainty as to what would be found at the other end.

Half a dozen of us began to collect all the information we could on the two questions:

1. Where are the Russians, and are they coming nearer?
2. What is the best place on the Black Sea coast at which to look for a boat?

On every post-card which I sent home I asked for news of the position of "Uncle Bruin," little thinking that at that time (the spring of 1917) a Russian advance from the Caucasus towards Kastamuni was much less likely than a retreat. The replies I

received were very vague, and we decided to canvass the town for information. Several Russians and Italians and one Englishman, a civilian from Constantinople, were interned there, and on various pretexts we managed to secure interviews with some of them, usually in one of the Turkish baths, which formed an ideal meeting-place because the sentry in charge of prisoners never got as far as the hot room. The general opinion seemed to be that the Russians had not penetrated much further west than Trebizond, and that it would be very difficult to find an unguarded boat anywhere. The people whom we consulted did their best to dissuade us from trying to get away. Their views were not uncoloured by fear of being implicated in our conspiracy, but there was force in the argument that if they, with their knowledge of the country and the language, did not think it worth while to make the attempt, it was foolish of us to dream of success. However, one of the Russians at last suggested that a local Greek whom he considered reliable should be despatched to the coast to find out how things stood, and, if possible, to make a definite arrangement for a boat. It seemed a sound preliminary step, and we collected 50 liras (about £40), handed it to this man, and hoped for the best. It is scarcely surprising to relate that we never saw him again.

Several officers who considered that without a cut-and-dried arrangement for a boat the attempt was hopeless now withdrew from the plot, though they continued to give ungrudging help to those who persisted. Captain R. J. Tipton of the Flying Corps (as it then was), Captain R. T. Sweet, D.S.O., of the 2/7th Gurkhas, Lieutenant H. C. W.

Bishop, attached to the 66th Punjabis, and myself, also a subaltern, attached to the 119th Infantry (the Mooltan Regiment), now resolved to make the plunge together. Two or three others were anxious to join us, but after long discussion we decided that to make the party larger than four would prejudice its chance of success, and we had regretfully to decline to take them. We told them, of course, of the date we fixed for our departure, so that they might leave on the same night if they decided to form a party of their own, but for various reasons they abandoned the attempt and we were the only starters.

After careful consideration we decided to strike for the Black Sea, rather than try to make our way eastwards to the Russians by land; to cover on foot the distance to Trebizond, or to the Russian forces beyond Sivas, seemed almost impossible, to say nothing of the risk of attempting to penetrate the Turkish lines. We were told that there were plenty of boats on the south shore of the Black Sea, but the evidence was conflicting as to the extent to which they were guarded and the distance to which they were dragged away from the water when not in use. The best chance of seizing a suitable craft seemed to be not actually on the coast itself, but fifteen miles up the Qizil Irmak, the largest river in Asia Minor, known anciently as the Halys. We learned that at this point, near the famous tobacco town of Bafra, there were many sea-going boats. It was almost due east of Kastamuni, and we were not so likely to be sought for in this direction as on the shorter and more obvious course due north to Ineboli. Bafra offered

the further advantage that it was on the land route to Trebizond if the worst came to the worst and we failed to find a boat.

For Bafra, then, we decided to aim. In a straight line it was only 110 miles from Kastamuni, but so rugged was the country that the actual distance to be covered, even assuming that we found the shortest way, was very much greater, and our scheme required many weeks of careful preparation. We would not have missed this part of the adventure for anything. To have a definite purpose in life made us the happiest prisoners in the camp, and the fact that all our plans had to be made in secret did not detract from their zest. We can never be sufficiently grateful to a few brother officers whom we took into our confidence and who helped us in a hundred ways. But to tell everybody would obviously have increased the chance of the plot becoming known to the Turks, and we had no compunction in concealing our scheme from the rest of the camp as far as possible.

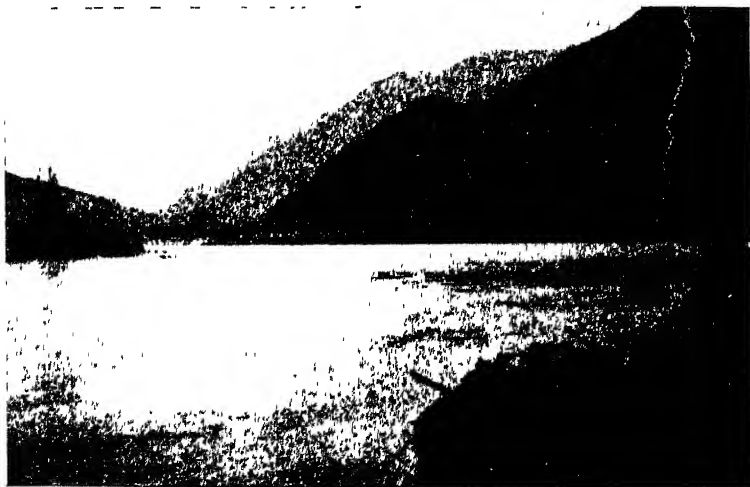
As we should have to walk at least two hundred miles, and to row or sail for a similar distance, the food problem required careful thought. Nobody need ever starve in the open during the early autumn, and we decided to start in August, when ripe corn, vegetables and fruit could be pilfered in the fields, to say nothing of mushrooms, toadstools and lichens, which we studied in a book on woodcraft found in the camp library. But we should be moving by night, when it was impossible to be sure of finding these things, nor was a vegetable diet sufficient for such a venture. It was therefore decided that each man should carry about





*Photo by W J Childs, Esq*

# INEBOLI



# THE QIZIL IRMAK

twenty pounds of food, and after prolonged consultation with our doctor, and much talk about calories and vitamins, we pinned our faith mainly to biscuits, which, if baked as hard as possible, seemed to be the best value obtainable at Kastamuni, weight for weight. Our mess cook, Bombardier Prosser, R.F.A., made forty-four pounds of these from flour, butter, sugar, eggs and raisins.

Each member of the party eventually carried the following food and equipment:

11 lb. of biscuits.

$2\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of dried goat—a sort of biltong flavoured with garlic—very nasty but alleged to be sustaining.

$2\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of local cheese.

$1\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of chocolate.

$1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of Horlick's malted milk.

A tin of condensed milk.

A small tin of meat to eat during the first night.

Some soup squares.

Some meat lozenges.

A little sugar and salt.

Three boxes of matches.

A compass.

A knife and spoon.

Spare socks.

A cardigan jacket.

A fez.

A piece of soap.

A toothbrush.

A water-bottle, filled at the start with strong tea.

£20 in Turkish paper money, carefully hidden in our clothes in case we were attacked by brigands.

Two who were smokers also carried a few cigarettes.

In addition, we shared the following between us :

A sail in two sections.

Forty feet of rope for rigging.

An axe-head for cutting a mast (this was a serious weight).

An air-cushion for holding extra water.

A box of Bengal lights.

Two candles,

Two canteens for cooking.

A frying-pan.

A cup.

A small towel.

Fishing tackle.

Needles, thread and darning wool for sail, boots and clothes.

An awl and beeswax for boot repairs : our boots were already old and would be bound to give trouble, and before we started, we all took the precaution of having a lesson in repairing from one of the officer-cobblers already mentioned.

Nails for boots and boat.

Bootlaces and string.

Scissors.

Shaving tackle.

A tin of cocoa.

A box of tea tabloids.

Quinine, Dover's powders and vaseline.

A few "Kola" tabloids, otherwise known as "Forced March," and capable, we hoped, of keeping us going for a few miles if food failed.

A first field-dressing.

The economy of washing and shaving apparatus (one towel, razor, etc., between the four of us) was

irksome, but we could not afford to carry an ounce of unnecessary gear, and there was not even room for any spare clothes except socks and cardigans.

All the provisions except the biscuits, cheese and meat were saved from parcels received from home. I had been accumulating chocolate in this way ever since we reached Kastamuni, and had obtained the malted milk by advertising, on the notice-board used for bartering the contents of parcels, that I was prepared to give socks, soap or honey in exchange, having decided to adopt a milk diet.

The sail was a patchwork affair made of a sheet, a towel and the lining of two wolseley valises, roped all round. It would measure about 10 by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet when sewed together, and weighed about seven pounds. It was designed by a sailor-prisoner, Lieutenant Nicholson, who knew the Black Sea, and it was intended, of course, for use with a mast to be made with our axe, if we should find a boat from which the gear had been removed; it would also be valuable as a covering when we slept at night, however inadequate a substitute for blankets. We did not find it easy to construct this damning article of our equipment without being observed, and on one occasion while we were working at it on the floor of the room which Bishop and I shared, a knock came at the door and the interpreter announced himself. The door was locked, of course, and the keyhole was immediately covered, but the delay in admitting him, while the sail was being rolled up and hidden, very nearly caused a search which would have revealed our conspiracy.

Frequent visits were made to the bazaar to buy the other articles, but as there was nothing

incriminating in them (except in the fezes and compasses), the various purchases, when spread over a number of days, did not arouse suspicion. The fezes were obtained through a Greek dentist in the town, whose help there is no harm in mentioning now that he, like nearly all his co-religionists, has left the country. The compasses were bought from a friendly shopkeeper when the guard was not looking. They cost sixpence apiece, had been made in Germany, and were very gimcrack; and in case they turned out untrustworthy Bishop very ingeniously made another one by suspending a dial by string from some magnetized needles.

By great good fortune we had a map of the country. Earlier in the year, an inspired friend in England sent me Sir Percy Sykes' "History of Persia." She was quite unaware that I had any intention of trying to escape, but the book contains the 1 : 2,000,000 map of Turkey in Asia issued by the Royal Geographical Society in 1910. There were two large volumes, but by the simple expedient of placing them under my arm I managed to smuggle them past the Turkish censor whose duty it was to examine them. The scale was very small—about thirty-two miles to an inch, and as the country has never been surveyed the map was not accurate, but it gave us the approximate position of the chief mountain ranges, rivers and towns, and was of enormous value. The piece of it which we carried, mounted on khaki linen, was afterwards, at the request of the Royal Geographical Society, placed in its museum, and is reproduced as the frontispiece of this book. There

was a far better German map—1 : 500,000—on the wall of the commandant's office, and we hatched many plots to copy it, but without success. Two small maps of the Black Sea which we had will be referred to later.

All this gear, including a full water-bottle, made a total of about thirty-five pounds for each man, in addition to the clothes we were wearing. This seemed about the limit of the weight we could carry in the dark across the extremely hilly country to be traversed; it proved more than the limit, as will be seen. With few exceptions, everything was stowed in rucksacks. Sweet had brought one with him from Kut, but the rest of us made them out of such canvas and drill as could be got together, and innumerable were the times we sewed on and unsewed straps made from haversack slings and old braces, in the effort to make our loads ride on our backs with reasonable comfort. On several occasions when whole-day picnics were allowed we were able to make the practical experiment (though it was rather a risky one) of carrying fifteen pounds or so of sand in these rucksacks, hidden by luncheon. It is hardly necessary to add that for a good many weeks before the flag fell we went into strict training. Football was eschewed, because it involved risk of injury which might incapacitate us, but no opportunity was neglected of fast walking, or, when possible, running, up and down the hills round the town.

The question of dress was fairly simple. We had so little knowledge of either Turkish or modern Greek that it would be useless to attempt

to pass as natives if we were challenged. On night marches, however, when only the outline of our figures would be visible, we decided to wear fezes. This was our only attempt at disguise. During the daytime we wore our uniforms, with ordinary field-service caps, partly because khaki is inconspicuous at a distance, but mainly in order that if we were stopped and questioned we might pretend to be Germans, our uniforms being sufficiently like theirs to pass muster away from the railway. To make such a claim more convincing we painted red, white and black tin badges for attachment to our caps, and of course we removed the incriminating brass buttons from our tunics and substituted leather ones.

The best Turkish scholar in the camp, Captain H. H. Rich, forged for us the following *vesika* in the vernacular:

“TO ALL TURKISH MILITARY AND CIVIL  
OFFICERS:

“Give every assistance to the bearer, Hauptmann Hermann von Bellow, and his party of three soldiers, who are surveying.

“OSMAN,

“*Commanding Angora Army Corps.*”

We could not speak German, but we did not anticipate that any Turks we might meet would do so either.

A document of this sort in England would be useless, of course, if not made out on a printed form, but in the Ottoman Empire army forms have fortunately not been developed to the same extent.

A *farman* is usually written on plain paper, and it is the seal, or rather the impress of a circular metal stamp, which gives it authenticity. Of course, we could not get a stamp with the proper inscription, but we bought one inscribed *Muhammad Ali* (made for the use of anyone of that name who could not write), and a smudged and illegible impression of this made a colourable imitation of the seal of the Angora general. As events turned out, this forged passport was of the greatest help.

We were allowed to move freely between the different houses in the "camp," and to contrive an exit from one of them presented surprisingly little difficulty. The house we selected had a side door leading out of a garden at the back, access to which could only be obtained through a gate that was padlocked every evening, but it was found that the staple through which the padlock passed could easily be withdrawn and replaced. The side door, again, opened on to an alley off the main street. No prisoner was ever allowed down this alley, which led to a mosque, but it was necessary to have a look at the door from the outside to find out the best way of opening it. The difficulty was neatly overcome by Lieutenant Dooley, to whose help in many ways we were indebted. While playing with a tennis ball in the main street he arranged for it to penetrate the alley, and before the sentry could stop him he dashed after it, returning not only with the ball but with the information that the door was merely nailed up with two boards, which could be forced from the inside. Two nights before the date fixed for the start I made a trial trip out of the house and back, to make sure that no obstacle had been overlooked.



Sweet was quartered in the school, at some distance from the group of houses in which the other three of us lived. To put the Turks, if possible, off the scent of the direction we had taken, he wrote a letter in which he spoke of our making for Sivas and enumerated some of the villages on that route. This was crumpled up and left in Bishop's and my room, and our orderly, Lance-Corporal Young, undertook to see that after our escape was discovered it should be found by the interpreter. It was a transparent trick, but the Turk, with all his guile, will sometimes swallow a ruse which would not impose upon an English rural policeman.

When all these preparations had been completed, it only remained to fix the night for our departure. It was the duty of the interpreter to sight every officer twice a day, and as he religiously performed this task our absence was bound to be noticed before noon on the morning after we disappeared. It was therefore necessary to cover the greatest possible distance on the first night, and a moon was highly desirable. On the other hand, we were too well known in Kastamuni to pass through the town itself in moonlight. We therefore wanted a night on which we should have an hour of darkness after getting out of the house. We had no almanac, but the best mathematician in the camp, after making elaborate calculations, predicted that the moon would rise at about 10.30 p.m. on August 8. For that evening the event was fixed.

## CHAPTER VI

### NIGHTS OF TOIL

WE wore our fezes, of course, and we turned our coats inside out, so as to resemble as little as possible the British officers with whom the inhabitants of Kastamuni were so familiar. For the same reason, we did not carry our rucksacks on our backs, but slung them over one shoulder in a piece of sacking until we should get clear of the town, and we wore socks over our boots to deaden the noise they would have made in the cobbled streets.

When the appointed hour approached, half a dozen brother officers were combining to make our actual exit from the house as easy as falling off a log. While two of them got the alley door open, the noise they made was drowned by others who sang choruses or hammered together beds taken to pieces for the occasion, and yet another engaged the attention of a sentry, who was dangerously near the door, by realistically describing the working of an internal combustion engine. Fortunately, Turkish sentries stand like sphinxes and rarely patrol. Not less valuable were the services of Bombardier Prosser, who, as an orderly, was less carefully guarded than the officers and had a nightly habit of putting on a fez and false beard, walking straight past the sentries, and prowling about the streets. He undertook to tap on the outside of the door when the coast was

clear, and then to guide us through by-ways with which he was familiar to a cemetery on the outskirts of the town. At half-past nine we got into position in the dark behind the door, waiting for his signal with much the same feelings that one had before going over the top of a trench. After a long interval a heavy tread came slowly down the alley. It was reported by a watcher at an upper window to be the sergeant of the guard, and we began to feel anxious, but a minute later (though it seemed an hour) Prosser tapped at the door. He had seen the sergeant enter the mosque to say his prayers, and everything was clear. The moment had come.

With hasty good-byes to our self-sacrificing friends we hurried out. A scramble up the hill, swiftly but quietly led by Prosser, and in five minutes we were seated panting under the cover of gravestones in the cemetery. As we donned our rucksacks and removed the socks from our boots, we discovered to our dismay that one of the two watches which we possessed between us had been left behind. To depend on one was too risky, and Prosser promptly undertook to go back and fetch the other. In less than a quarter of an hour the excellent fellow returned with it, and we bade him a final farewell.

To the best of our knowledge, nobody had seen either ourselves or Prosser. The initial difficulty of getting out of the town had been overcome, and whatever the future might have in store we were at least to have a run for our money. To be dragged back into captivity on the very first night would have been a bitter fate. Fortunately for our

peace of mind, we did not know that we had a very short start before our absence was discovered. What happened is described by Captain Johnston and Captain Yearsley in their well-known book, "Four-fifty Miles to Freedom":

*"Il n'y a pas trois officiers.* Such was the memorable phrase by which Sharif Bey, Captain of the Guard, and a man regardless of detail, announced to us that four officers had got safely away from the camp. Someone must have seen and suspected them, for less than three-quarters of an hour after their start the alarm was given, shots were fired, and the camp suddenly bristled with sentries. Through this cordon Prosser had to get back to his quarters. A Turkish sergeant, into whom he ran full tilt, was knocked over backwards. Followed by revolver shots from the angry sergeant, Prosser darted up one side street, doubled on his tracks by another, and by his own private entrance reached his quarters in safety. Here he disposed of his beard and fez, shaved off his moustache in the dark, and got into bed. When, a few minutes later, Captain Sharif Bey came round to feel the hearts of all the orderlies, Prosser could hardly be roused from an innocent sleep, and his steady heart-beats allayed all suspicion as to the part he had played."

Of all this we remained blissfully in ignorance.

We were on the western edge of the town, and as our direction was to be almost due east we had first to make a circuit to the north. Before we could get clear of the town, the moon came out—at least half an hour, according to the calculations of our astronomer, before she was due. Her arrival made extra care necessary, and we decided to give a wider berth than we had intended to some big

barracks which lay before us. Our first obstacle was the Ineboli road, which had to be crossed, and as we approached it we were disappointed to find that it was not deserted. Country carts for next day's market were filing into the town with exasperating deliberation, and in the bright moonlight it was impossible to get across without being seen. We took cover in the ditch at the side of the road, but one cart stopped for repairs to its harness almost opposite us, and after some time had passed we decided to make a detour on hands and knees to avoid it. This brought us to a point on the road where there was not even a ditch, and the traffic still continued, but we made a dash for the other side and reached, not unobserved, but probably unidentified as Englishmen, a field of high crops. Thence we made our way to the Sinope road, which we crossed without difficulty.

We were now in open country, and had to find our own way across pasture, corn and stubble, steering always eastwards, as far as the ground would allow. One of the picnics which we had beguiled into this direction had enabled us to note certain landmarks and tracks, but we gave a wide berth to all roads, thereby multiplying many times the difficulties of pursuit, though reducing our pace by half. For guide we relied chiefly on Bishop, who had a better sense of direction than the rest of us, though we all kept a pretty constant eye on the north star. The going was continually up or down hill, and we began to realise that our packs were too heavy, while the small loose stones characteristic of Anatolia made walking in the dark very tiring.



NEAR KASTAMUNI



NEAR KASTAMUNI

Happily, no further untoward incidents occurred during the night, though the chorus of dogs which began whenever we approached a village or farm was nerve-racking. In Anatolia a man moving at night seems to rouse all the dogs for miles around. Occasionally a gun was fired, but apparently it was the custom to fire a shot into the air whenever the dogs barked louder than usual, as a warning to marauders what they might expect. At two o'clock we scrambled down to a stream running a thousand feet below us, to drink and fill our water-bottles and to lighten our loads by eating the tinned meat. Then we plodded on for another hour and a half, until the first light of dawn appeared. To our alarm it caught us close to a village, from which the sounds of peasants preparing for the day were already coming.

The only cover of any sort was a by no means dense pine-wood a few hundred yards away, and there was nothing for it but to make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible among the trees. As the light increased we found that not only was there no really good cover but sheep-tracks ran in all directions, and as sheep meant shepherds it was necessary to maintain a vigilant look-out, tired though we all were. While three slept, therefore, or tried to sleep—for anxiety and the heat of the sun made sleep difficult—the fourth kept watch at the upper edge of the wood.

We could see the country between us and Kastamuni, which we reckoned was only ten miles away, though we had covered a much greater distance. There was no sign of any pursuit, but during the afternoon a dog was heard barking close

at hand, and a minute later we were horrified to see a boy watching us. It is a sound rule to take the offensive in such circumstances.

“Thrice blest is he that hath his quarrel just,  
But four times he that gets his blow in fust.”

Sweet was therefore deputed to go and speak to the boy. But he made off as soon as he found he was observed, and of course we lost no time in changing our hiding-place to another part of the wood. We were afraid that the whole wood might be searched, but nothing further happened. On this, as on subsequent occasions when we were seen by the country people, we over-estimated the interest we aroused. Sheep trooped past us, but both the inhabitants and their dogs left us alone.

As our experience of the previous night had shown us we should have to reduce our loads, we did not stint ourselves of food on this first day, and before resuming our march we lightened our packs by throwing away all the cheese, which was ageing rapidly, and two-thirds of the dried meat. We left the wood at dusk and kept going for eight hours, luckily finding tracks for part of the distance; but practically the whole way was up or down hill, the valleys running transversely to the course we were steering. A bathe in a stream which we crossed was a welcome interlude, marred, however, by Bishop losing his soap and Tipton his knife. They dared not strike a light, for we were close to several farms, and in a sheep-pen illuminated by a resin torch a shepherd was on guard.

When day dawned we decided to lie up in a thick wood on the summit of a hill. This made an excellent hiding-place, and we found it safe to



light a fire towards evening and to make a stew with a little meat and some maize cobs we had gathered during the night. While so engaged, we were disturbed first by a horseman trotting through the wood, and then by a man who was cutting timber close to us, but neither of them spotted us, in spite of the smoke of our fire.

As the wild and mountainous country seemed deserted, we left the wood about an hour before dark; but before long we came to a cornfield in which women were working—both in peace and war they do most of the field labour in Turkey—and until they went home we lay hid, stuffing ripe wheat into our pockets while we waited. Our eastward course took us up a narrow gorge, and as our water-bottles were empty we tried to reach a stream which we could hear below us: it was a pitch-black night, and we could see nothing. A path led downwards, but it did not lead to water, and after a time it began to ascend again. Two hours passed, the path became rougher and rougher, ourselves thirstier and thirstier, and in desperation we decided to try a rocky gully which dropped down steeply on one side of us. Sweet led the way, but in his eagerness slipped and cut his leg rather badly on a stone. To avoid breaking our necks, we lit our candles and spent over an hour crawling down; but all our labour was wasted, for we came to a sheer drop of at least a hundred feet to the stream. There was nothing for it but to retrace our steps. Tipton took the lead and showed wonderful resource and energy in extricating us from the gully; but we failed to find water that night, and at one in the morning we lay down

on the hillside, very thirsty, thoroughly worn out, and depressed by the knowledge that we had advanced but little on our way. Being several thousand feet up, and with only the sail as a covering, we lay close to one another in the effort to keep warm, and there was no competition for the outside places.

When daylight came we had no difficulty in getting down to the stream, which was crystal clear, and we found a delightful camping-place in the gorge, well away from any road or house and surrounded by magnificent oak-trees. Thirst quenched, our first care was to wash and bandage Sweet's leg. Then we husked with our hands—a laborious process—the wheat we had picked, and the porridge made from it, though extremely nasty, had useful rib-binding qualities. Bishop fished unsuccessfully in the stream, with dried meat as bait—no other was available.

In the evening we found our way through the gorge and up on to some high downs which contained a good many farms, and from midnight onwards we followed a track through a pine-forest and made uninterrupted progress. Unfortunately, the porridge had seriously disagreed with Tipton, and at 3 a.m. we found it necessary to halt for the day. Ants worried us, and we got little sleep, and as we had picked nothing during the night we had to be content with a small ration of biscuits and dried meat.

When night again fell, Tipton's condition had not improved, but though he was in much pain, with symptoms of appendicitis, he gamely carried on, and indeed we now accomplished the best march

of the whole journey. We found tracks for most of the way, and the gradients were fairly easy for a change, but part of the route lay across plough-land and was very trying, especially for Tipton. About midnight, while passing through a farm, we were attacked by a number of large whitish dogs of a collie type, who jumped out upon us from behind a haystack. Such dogs in Turkey can be very savage, and have even been known to attack a caravan and to pull men off their horses. Happily, the smallest child whom they know will suffice to pacify them, and before the brutes could do us any damage the farmer appeared and called them away, with a salutation to us in Turkish, which we returned. No doubt our fezes and the darkness saved us. During the march we spent an hour picking the ears from a stack of wheat, and an even better find was a field in which marrows, French beans and maize were growing together, one above the other. Altogether it was an excellent night's work, and we estimated that we had covered twenty miles when we lay down at three o'clock.

Our intention was to push on to a hiding-place at the first sign of dawn, but it was broad daylight when we woke, and we had to make a hurried bee-line for some bushes on a hill. There we went to sleep again, but on waking once more and finding nobody about we decided to move down into the valley and look for water. In descending, we very narrowly escaped walking straight into two gendarmes, who crossed our path not a hundred yards ahead of us. We then found a gully containing water, and spent a fairly comfort-

able day, the vegetables we had picked filling an aching void, though leaving us still hungry. Tipton remained in great pain, and though we treated him with hot compresses and made him a bed with fir branches, we decided he must have a complete night's rest. So we stayed in the gully till the following evening dozing, writing up our diaries, mending our boots—already terribly knocked about—darning our socks and patching numerous rents in our clothes. Darning-wool soon ran short, and we had to unravel the sleeves of our cardigans.

When we left the gully we marched for two hours by a good track along the river-bed, but then we lost the path and failed to strike another. At last we found ourselves in a dense forest, which it was impossible to penetrate in the dark, and soon after midnight we lay down till dawn, when we went on again through trees and scrub which gave good cover. After a time the country became more open, but being tired of groping our way at night we pushed ahead past villages and farms without attempting to avoid observation. A few of the people working in the fields must have seen us, but they made no attempt to stop or follow us, and an old man whom we surprised at close quarters seemed not less anxious to get out of our way than we were to keep out of his. During the afternoon we took cover and made a stew, and in the evening we marched for three hours along a rocky gorge, putting up a fox on the way. A water-mill held out hopes of flour, but on breaking into it we found it had been swept clean. We bivouacked for the night, but were so cold that we slept very little.



NEAR BOYABAD



THE GEUK IRMAK

We were aiming for the valley of the Geuk Irmak, which ran almost due east, and in the morning, after a stiff climb, we reached the cliff above the right bank. We reckoned we had covered less than half the distance from Kastamuni to Bafra, and we were determined now to abandon cross-country travelling and to follow the road down the valley, be the danger of meeting gendarmes what it might. Our progress had been so slow that if we continued our policy of avoiding roads we could not hope to reach Bafra before our food gave out. As a matter of fact, we were even further from Bafra than we thought.

The day was spent in a wood on the hillside, and our start in the evening was delayed by a pair of lovers loitering near our hiding-place. To reach the road we had to cross the river, and although at this time of the year it only contained about two feet of water we removed our puttees, boots and socks, to avoid the risk of foot trouble. Hardly had we put them on again at the other side when we came to another branch of the river, which had been invisible in the dark. After we had repeated the operation our boots got saturated while we crossed some irrigated fields, and we had to doff them a third time to wade across an irrigation canal. It was 11 p.m. before we reached the main road.

We had not gone far eastwards along it when we met a man and two boys on ponies, driving cattle. In the darkness we thought they might be mounted gendarmes, and we tried to take cover by the roadside, but Sweet and I failed to get out of sight in time, and our attempt to conceal ourselves

aroused the suspicion of the man, who dismounted and asked who we were. It was a tense moment. Sweet promptly replied in Turkish that we were Germans, but the man shook his head and declared that we were prisoners of war. We denied it, and he repeated it, again and again. Then he shrugged his shoulders, mounted his pony and took himself, his boys and his cattle off, while we continued our march, wondering whether he would put gendarmes on our track. None turned up; probably the search for us on this road had by now been abandoned, and it was rare for a Turkish peasant to move a yard to help the hated *zaptieh*, whose pay was so consistently in arrears that he could only keep body and soul together by preying on the population.

To our disgust, the road led over a bridge back to the right bank, whence we had made such a tedious crossing a little earlier in the night. Two hours after daylight we left the road and lay up till evening in a wood, but the valley, which was at a much lower altitude than Kastamuni, was infested with mosquitoes and with the same sort of biting fly that we had known in Mesopotamia, so that we passed a sleepless day. Worst of all, no vegetables had been found during the march, and we had to be content with a ration of three biscuits each for the whole day, with cocoa for breakfast and soup for dinner. At six in the evening we returned to the river, and after collecting some maize and marrows from the adjoining fields walked on steadily, but the marrows proved an irksome addition to our packs, and we registered a vow that we would never again pick any at the beginning of a march. At midnight we reached a large village, in which a

number of people were still out of doors, but we went boldly past them, and they took no notice of us. Unfortunately, the village street seemed a cul-de-sac, and after many attempts to find a road through unostentatiously (we dared not ask the way), we were obliged to retrace our steps and to bivouac in a graveyard for the rest of the night.

It seemed dangerous to go through the village in daylight, and when dawn came we made a detour on to a hill which appeared to be deserted and to offer safety for the day. It was safe enough, but very uncomfortable, for we got little shade in the morning, a thunderstorm wet us to the skin in the afternoon, and raw marrows proved an unsatisfactory diet. It was not possible to light a fire until evening. Bishop made a reconnaissance in the afternoon, and discovered that we were within a few miles of a town of considerable size, which we decided must be Duraghan. At dusk we went on again, still wet through, and by nine o'clock had made a circuit of the town, but we failed to pick up the road beyond. At midnight we lay down for a miserable two hours: the night was cold, our clothes were not yet dry, and Tipton, though in less pain, had a touch of fever.

It was a relief to get going once more, but the disappearance of the road was maddening, and it was not till much later that we discovered it had crossed the river again. Suddenly we found ourselves in a village, with dogs barking frantically. A man approached, and we made a dash for the other end of the village and over a hedge into a field. Just as we got clear a shot-gun was fired in our



direction, but no pellets hit us and we were not challenged.

At our next halt Sweet left his uniform cap behind in the darkness, and was obliged to wear his fez at all times. There was not much risk of the cap being found and leading to our recapture, and the loss was of small consequence, because even Germans wear fezes in Turkey, but further deficiencies in our meagre equipment might be more serious, and I instituted a check whenever we repacked our rucksacks after a halt, the inventory being read over by the light of a match.

In the morning we were still unable to find a road, and as we had now been eleven nights away from Kastamuni, and more rapid progress was absolutely necessary for success, we resolved to ask the way and endeavour to buy food. At the first farm at which we applied, the people looked half starved themselves and had nothing to sell, but they directed us to an adjoining village. On the way we met the headman, a middle-aged peasant, who conducted us ceremoniously to his house, where he had the *musffiar-odasi* (guest-room) swept out. Sweet, whose knowledge of Turkish was invaluable, explained that we were Germans engaged in making a map of the country, and we produced our *vesika* and map. As we had no surveying instruments, and the map was a tiny fragment of paper, the story was not exactly convincing, but it seemed to be quite good enough for our host, who could not even read the *vesika*. Half an hour passed, and our hopes of a meal were sinking to vanishing point, when the usual preliminary cups of coffee appeared. If we had not been so hungry we should

have remembered that, according to Turkish practice, the beans had to be roasted and ground, and the water to be boiled and then again brought twice to the boiling-point with the coffee in it.

Our host's conversation was not less enjoyable than the prospect of his food. He was a sergeant who had been fighting against the English in the Dardanelles and was now on sick leave, but his attitude to the war, like that of most Turks with whom we spoke during captivity, seemed apathetic. After the coffee (it is not etiquette in Turkey to interrogate a visitor before this has been offered) he asked many questions, and when he put one which was too awkward to answer—for instance, what weapons we carried—Sweet had to pretend not to understand. Our rucksacks aroused his curiosity, and we told him that the sail was a tent—a plausible lie, for the pack of a Turkish soldier includes a section of a sort of forty-pounder.

At last a carpet was spread, we squatted round a low table, and porridge, cucumber sliced in milk, wads of a mixture of flour and milk, and finally stewed pears, were served in succession, everybody dipping a wooden spoon into a common dish. It was not luxurious food, but we all ate about three times as much at this sitting as we had eaten in a whole day for more than a week. With great difficulty we persuaded our host to accept some money, as well as a cigarette which we assured him was made of the best German tobacco.

When we came to discuss our route we were sadly disappointed to find that we had not made as much progress as we hoped. The town passed during the previous night, which we thought was Dura-

ghan, was really Boyabad, at least 15 miles further up the valley. We were still 55 miles from Bafra in a straight line, and at least 90 miles by our proposed route down the valleys of the Geuk Irmak and Qizil Irmak.

About ten o'clock the sergeant set us on a track which would lead, he said, to the Duraghan road, and we bade him a grateful farewell. On recrossing the Geuk Irmak we picked some blackberries and onions in one of the irrigated fields on the other side, and then, obeying our instructions to the best of our ability, we followed an empty stream-bed at right angles to the river, and began to climb steeply. On reaching the top, which took a couple of hours, we realised to our dismay that we had apparently misunderstood the sergeant's directions and had failed to find the road to Duraghan. We bivouacked for the afternoon, made tea, and held a council of war.

We were all weary of night marching, and there seemed little prospect of getting adequate rest during the daytime in the damp and mosquito-infested valley. Food was at a low ebb, and while our loads were certainly getting lighter, our strength was failing still more rapidly. Days too hot for sleep, and nights too cold, had taken it out of us. Our boots were giving trouble and would hardly last for another hundred miles of night work, even on roads, which in Turkey are almost as plentifully bestrewn with loose stones as the hillsides. Lastly, we could not expect to bluff the inhabitants for many days together along a main route presumably patrolled by gendarmes. On the other hand, our map showed us that the nearest point on the coast

was less than thirty miles away to the north-east, across one of the mountain ranges which screen the Black Sea from the interior. After long and careful discussion, we found the sea an irresistible attraction, and resolved to strike for it. This necessitated a repetition, in an aggravated form, of the hill-climbing which had proved so trying in the early days of the trek, and as it would be almost impossible to find our way in the dark across such country, we decided to travel openly in the daylight, picking out our way, or asking it when necessary, and getting food at villages or farms whenever we could. There seemed no reason why, away from roads, we should not repeat our successful bluff of that morning.

What had happened at Kastamuni since we left? I again quote Johnston and Yearsley's book:

"Keeling's party escaped on August 8, 1917. Each day that followed, Sharif Bey brought official news of their capture in different parts of Asia Minor. One was reminded of Mark Twain's stolen white elephant. The marching powers of the four officers must have been phenomenal; sometimes they covered hundreds of miles in a few hours. Confined to our houses, we amused ourselves by taking bets with the Turkish sentries, who were convinced that the fugitives would be brought back to Kastamuni within a week. In their opinion, those who had escaped were madmen. What could be more delightful than the life they were running away from? One could sit in a chair all day quietly smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee, far away from the detested war—assuredly they were quite mad!"

During all these eleven days we had seen no sign

of the pursuit. We heard afterwards that the enemy had no clue to our direction, and concentrated their energies on the Ineboli road ; in spite of the discovery of Sweet's letter the commandant refused to believe that we could really contemplate reaching Sivas.

Our escape had a lamentable effect upon the treatment of the officers left behind. For some weeks exercise was restricted or stopped altogether, and various other punishments were inflicted upon them for our crime. That they, for the most part, considered that escaping came first and excused all the discomfort and suffering we brought upon their heads was only what, knowing them, we would have expected ; but it was generous of them, none the less.

## CHAPTER VII

Θάλαττα, θάλαττα

WE started on our fresh compass-bearing at half-past four on the afternoon of August 19, and within twenty minutes our policy of bluff was put to a severe test. On reaching a village we thought it well to ask the way to Telkelik, a small town marked on our map as midway on a direct line to the coast. Having been civilly shown the right road, we boldly inquired for food, and a charming dame who seemed to rule the place produced an admirable meal of vegetables, bread, plums and *yoghourt* (curdled milk), of which we ate all we could and bought more to take away with us. The lady said she had seen us at Kastamuni, but whether she credited our German story or knew us for what we were we did not stop to inquire; a man who came up during the conversation was eyeing us rather suspiciously. On leaving the village we were intercepted by an old woman who sold us as many apples as we could carry, and then we hurried on with all speed. Dozens of people saw us, and one party having a meal by the roadside asked us to wait for them, but we pleaded urgent business and pushed forward. At eight o'clock we bivouacked for the night. It had been a great day, crammed with incident, beginning in damp depression and ending full of hope; and to

crown it all we slept for eight hours—the first long sleep of the journey.

Next morning we began to climb steadily, and the scenery—wood, water and rock—became more and more wild and magnificent. The mountains were intersected by deep and wooded ravines, and rocky pinnacles rose sheer from the water's edge. Several times at the junction of two streams we did not know which to follow, and actually we went a good deal out of our course. To attempt to find the way at night through the network of hills would have been hopeless, and travelling openly in the sunshine, after a good night's rest, was a delightful change from our former furtive methods. Towards noon our path brought us to a cattle-trough, and in a snug spot a few yards away we halted till evening, well satisfied with the progress we were making towards the sea. While we were cooking the onions picked on the previous day, a gendarme came down the path and stopped to water his horse at the trough, but we kept perfectly still, and he passed by without discovering us. At five in the afternoon we went on, still ascending, to a farm at which we secured another meal and bought flour and butter for the road. The Greek woman who supplied us said she had arrived from Kastamuni a fortnight before, but she seemed to accept quite readily our statement that we were Germans. At dusk we found ourselves in a village near the top of the watershed, fully 4,000 feet above sea-level.

As the night would certainly be cold at this elevation, and was likely to be rainy, we decided to seek shelter under cover. Only one man, however,

could be found in the village, and he declared that he was only passing through, that all the men were away soldiering, and that the women, being Moslems, would never allow us to spend the night there. After long argument a display of cash overcame opposition, and we were taken to a log-hut which appeared to be a travellers' rest-house. A fire was soon blazing on the hearth, and we consumed enormous quantities of sour milk, flour boiled in milk, and a sort of treacle made of raisins. After supper we were visited by a number of men who were, after all, forthcoming from the village. Turkish peasants lead monotonous lives, and the arrival of a stranger is almost the only excitement they ever get. The presence of Europeans made a red-letter day, and we were overwhelmed with questions about the war, about our own mission, and about Germany and Germans. For ourselves also the evening was sufficiently surprising: we had never expected, when we left Kastamuni, to put up at a rest-house on our way to the sea. No one seemed to doubt our story, although the party included a soldier who had recently arrived from Constantinople on leave and had probably passed through Kastamuni. At last, long after we wanted to get to bed, sleeping-mats and blankets were spread and we spent a cosy night. So, unhappily for us, did legions of small bedfellows.

At daybreak we had a breakfast of bread, butter and treacle, and we took a further small supply of these things—all we could buy—in our rucksacks. A man accompanied us for part of the way to point out the road, and it was not without a sigh



of relief that we parted from him ; for bluff, however amusing, was distinctly dangerous. On reaching the outskirts of Telkelik, we steered north-east for the coast without entering the town, and it was well we did so, for we heard later that it contained a detachment of troops.

We were now on the north side of the watershed, and suddenly we beheld the Black Sea stretched out before us in the sunshine—only forty-one hours after we had decided to strike for it. It was a thrilling moment. Xenophon's Ten Thousand, or what was left of them, can scarcely have been more elated when they sighted the same sea two or three hundred miles farther east.

At ten we halted in a pine-wood and celebrated the occasion by breakfasting on some eggs obtained at a farmhouse. Then we set about converting into something edible the flour we had bought on the previous day. It was easy to make a dough, and to knead into it a couple of eggs, a little butter and our last tin of condensed milk, but how to bake the mixture was a problem. We tried to make an oven in the ground with some flat stones, but the fire cracked them, and in the end we had to be content with frying the stuff on our frying-pan and canteen-lids. Instead of the biscuits we had aimed at, we achieved only glorified chupatties, but although these soon crumbled into small fragments in our rucksacks, they gave us a fresh lease of life. We marched at five o'clock and passed through several beautiful valleys, well wooded with spruce, pine, beech, oak and walnut. There were even a few pear and plum trees by the roadside, but the fruit, though ripe, was poor and hardly worth

picking. At dusk we collected bracken and had a luxurious night.

Next day, August 22, after crossing a deep gorge, with a scramble down through brushwood and a stiff climb on the other side, we reached a point commanding a good view of the coast, now only three miles away. Far on our left lay the promontory of Sinope. Upon the water, sailing within two miles of the shore, were no less than four boats of about three tons each. There was evidently no truth in the stories we had heard in Kastamuni that boats were not allowed to ply. We decided to reconnoitre when night fell, and in the meantime we kept under cover in a thick wood, where we could light a fire and cook some beans we had gathered. During the afternoon we sewed together the two pieces of our sail and cut a handle for our axe-head, in case we had to make a mast. An hour before sunset we descended to within a few yards of a shingly beach, at a point some twenty miles south-east of Sinope. We reckoned that during the fortnight's journey from Kastamuni to the sea we had covered nearly 200 miles.

On this same day, as we learned afterwards, the Russian Black Sea Fleet attacked the town of Ordu, about 150 miles to the east of us. Troops were landed, many buildings blown up, and a number of boats destroyed. Such a raid could have been made just as easily within reach of Kastamuni, and if only we could have communicated with the Russians and arranged a rendezvous, a large proportion of the prisoners might have made a dash for freedom.

Just before dusk a large rowing-boat, with eight

oars, pulled in to the shore about 500 yards to the east of us, and was dragged up on to the beach by the crew and by other men who appeared from a couple of houses hard by. We came to the conclusion that it was much too heavy for us to get back into the water, and we must therefore look round for another boat. Unfortunately, it was now pitch dark, and we decided to wait till the morning.

Before dawn we were walking eastwards along the beach, and our hopes rose high when daylight revealed a small boat, complete with mast and sail, moored a little way from the shore. We hurried towards her to find out whether it was feasible to get away in her when night came; it was too early for people to be about, and it seemed quite safe to make a rapid inspection. To reach the boat we had to pass the end of a dilapidated boat-house. Nothing seemed less likely to be inhabited, but to our astonishment and dismay there was a Turkish sentry inside, evidently guarding the very boat that we were making for.

In war, *toujours l'audace*. We therefore gave the usual greeting, *Salam alaikum*, to which he replied apathetically, *Wa alaikum as salam*, and we walked on as quickly as we dared, very self-conscious but trying to appear at our ease. For a few seconds we thought we had pulled it off, but before we could get many yards away the man overtook us and said that his sergeant wanted to see us. It had been arranged that if we were challenged, Sweet, who was not only our best Turkish scholar but also had the smartest uniform (or rather the least tattered), should pose as the

German officer, Hauptmann von Bellow, mentioned in the *vesika*, and he went back to interview the sergeant while we sat down on the beach. Before long, however, two other soldiers came to fetch us and we all had to return to the boat-house, which turned out to be the headquarters of a military post of ten men. The place was called Kusafa.

Sweet told his story, to which we did our best to give verisimilitude by saluting him, clicking our heels and carrying his rucksack; but we could not gather from the sergeant's Turk-like taciturnity whether he suspected our identity or not. To explain our presence on the beach we told him that we wished to hire a vessel to take us eastwards to Samsun, and we asked him to negotiate a passage for us in the boat we had seen that morning. This boat had now been brought to the shore, and we found that the skipper hailed from Trebizond and spoke a little English. We should have been no better off at Samsun, but we thought it just possible that, once we were at sea, a bribe would persuade him to take us to his native town, which was in Russian hands. A long private colloquy between the skipper and the sergeant encouraged a hope that bluff would still see us through, but at last the sergeant decided that he must submit our application to his superior officer at Gerze (Jerse), a town six miles to the north along the coast. His first idea was to send a messenger with a letter, but he seemed to get gradually more and more suspicious and finally declared that we must all accompany him to Gerze. We said we could not spare the time and were obliged to proceed eastwards on our military duties,

but he would take no refusal and turned out the guard to make it clear that we must obey.

It was arranged for the same boat, which had a crew of five, to take us to Gerze, and after eating some fish, for which we paid, we embarked with the sergeant and two soldiers, who carried rifles. During the voyage we saw several boats on the beach which would have suited us admirably and were apparently unguarded, and we cursed the fate which made us turn to the right instead of to the left when we reached the shore that morning. We had little doubt that we could have secured a boat and got away in it at night, if we had not stumbled on the guard.

The situation was not hopeful, but even now it was not certain that all was lost. On our arrival at Gerze after two hours' rowing, Sweet went off with the sergeant to interview the local gendarme officer, while the rest of us remained in the boat. A small crowd collected, and we were closely scrutinised by the crew of a naval patrol vessel lying at the same jetty, one of whom was heard to say, "They are not Germans, but English." This sent our spirits down to zero, and they did not rise when, after a wait of half an hour, two gendarmes arrived and told us to accompany them. We were taken to the gendarmerie station and asked for our names, and when we gave German ones an official inquired whether one of us would like to speak on the telephone to a German officer at Sinope, the principal Turkish naval arsenal on the Black Sea. The proposal was received without enthusiasm, for none of us could talk German, but Tipton knew a few words and volunteered for the job. He could

think of nothing to say but *Sprechen sie deutsch?* and having repeated this *ad nauseam*, he threw down the receiver and remarked with well-simulated disgust that the telephone was out of order. Being Turkish, it might reasonably have been expected to be, but unfortunately it wasn't.

We were now taken to the office of the commandant of the town, and there found Sweet. He told us that he had succeeded in persuading the gendarme officer that we were Germans on our way to the Caucasus to assist in a fresh Turkish offensive. The fellow had, indeed, given Sweet coffee, and was taking him back to the jetty to set us on our way to Samsun, when, as luck would have it, they met a Turkish naval lieutenant, who probably knew a German officer when he saw one, and insisted that Sweet should visit the commandant. The commandant had a description of us. The game was up. Without more ado we admitted that we were English officers.

The commandant bowed, smiled, and said that he knew our names, and had been warned of our escape soon after we got away. He was politeness itself, and there was nothing for us to do but to try to look pleasant. We should be sent, he said, to Sinope, fifteen miles away to the north, and we did not doubt that we should be consigned to that city's gaol. He questioned us closely as to our reasons for wishing to escape. Of course, we said that our treatment at Kastamuni was so intolerable that we simply *had* to come away, but he found this reply quite unconvincing, and even the further plea that no shaving-soap could be bought in the town failed to satisfy him. Our answers were

written down, with the aid of a Turk who had served in the American Navy.

We were led into another room to be searched, but only our compasses, Sweet's and Bishop's diaries, the *vesika*, a small Turkish map of the Black Sea, and a few tea tabloids (which the commandant pocketed for his own domestic use) were confiscated. We were allowed to keep our fezes, our other maps, our sail and the remnants of our food, and I managed to hide my own diary. Most of our money was taken away later, and a receipt given for it.

During the afternoon the gendarme officer whom Sweet had bamboozled came to take charge of us. Having been reprimanded for his credulity, he was in a very bad temper, and he put us into a sort of cell and told his men to handcuff us. The order was on the point of being executed when the commandant arrived providentially, and not only cancelled it but went far out of his way to be pleasant. He ordered a much more comfortable room to be cleared for us, and in the evening he came in again, gave us chairs, handed round cigarettes, and asked many questions about our experiences. He was particularly anxious to hear by what route we had come, and how we had obtained food, but of course we did not enlighten him. He announced that the Turkish War Office had telegraphed for us to be sent back to Kastamuni at once, instead of to Sinope, and we were to leave next day. We should have to traverse the same range of mountains that we had crossed on our way to the sea, but this time, of course, we should go by road. Having given an order that we were to

receive the military ration of bread, the commandant bade us a polite farewell. We spent the night in the same room, closely guarded by sentries on the landing, who came in to inspect us at intervals, and by others in the street outside our window. Our waking hours were devoted to speculations regarding the number of months we should spend in gaol, and the chances of getting back the kit we had left in Kastamuni.

Next morning we were allowed to visit the bazaar to buy food for our journey. It was market day, and we were followed everywhere by a curious but quite civil crowd. At noon we were given the order *Haidi!* (March!). This was an unpleasant hour at which to start on a long journey in summer, but we were agreeably surprised to find a donkey waiting to take our rucksacks and water-bottles. Runaway prisoners of war, who had been carrying these things on their backs for a fortnight, really had no right to expect such consideration.

The authorities were taking no risks, and sent a guard of no less than nine soldiers with us, commanded by the sergeant who had stopped us on the beach the previous morning. He had gained much kudos from our capture, and was pleased with himself and friendly to us. The commandant's clerk, on the other hand, who accompanied us for part of the way on horseback, was very officious, and ordered some small pocket-knives, which could hardly be used as weapons, to be taken away from us during the march.

Our first day's journey from Gerzelay northward along the coast to the Sinope-Kastamuni road. Tipton was still very unwell, and though a doctor



had been promised none had been forthcoming. With great consideration for him the guard allowed frequent halts, so that we took five hours to cover nine miles. The road struck inland at the village of Shakir Oghlu, which had been reduced to ruins by the guns of a Russian man-of-war a few weeks earlier.

We spent the night in some wooden barracks, the headquarters of the reserve regiment guarding the coast. They had been built since the outbreak of war, and were much cleaner than the ordinary Turkish barracks with which we were too familiar. We were put into a small room of the officers' quarters, with leave to cook food in their kitchen, and rations of cooked beans and bread were served out. The bread was made of maize and was very nasty, and we left most of it uneaten, with the result that for our next ration we received wheaten bread, ordinarily only supplied to Turkish officers, and when we asked for more beans we discovered, to our embarrassment, that the issue of both beans and wheaten bread had been made by our hosts out of their own not too plentiful supply.

Next day we were visited by a number of Turkish officers, naval and military; in fact, we held a sort of reception. They discussed the progress of the war, but would not believe that Baghdad was in British hands; the capture was, indeed, never admitted in Turkey until after the armistice. Equally ill-informed were five German sailors, who came in from the German wireless station a few miles away. The commandant promised to get a doctor from this station to see

Tipton, but he never turned up. Our visitors included a cobbler, who did some much-needed repairs to our boots, and in the light of subsequent events was a godsend.

The journey to Kastamuni was expected to take a week, and a pony was provided for Tipton, but the rest of us had to walk and to carry our own rucksacks. Soon after leaving the barracks we overtook two donkeys, which we strongly suspected had been provided for us, but they were loaded with the soldiers' kit and with contraband tobacco, which they were taking to Kastamuni to sell. Our escort was not the same as on the previous day, but it again numbered nine men, all unmounted. One of them was without a uniform—a condition not then uncommon in the Turkish Army. The sergeant in command was at first insolent about the donkeys, but gradually responded to amicable treatment, and during the day he commandeered a pony for our rucksacks and water-bottles, besides one for himself. Our route lay up the valley of the Chobanlar Chai, through thick woods and occasional villages, and we passed the German wireless station ten miles inland from Sinope, just out of range of Russian men-of-war. The road hardly deserved the name, for it was strewn with large blocks of stone, and the streams we crossed were unbridged. Halts to buy more tobacco or to cook food were frequent, and we made slow progress.

At dusk we reached a village called Chakildagh and took possession of an empty house for the night. The inhabitants were evidently accustomed to work for the army's comfort, and a fire was quickly blazing on the hearth and kept going till

daybreak ; but as there was no ventilation except the chimney, and the soldiers insisted on sharing the room with us, the atmosphere was not pleasant. We bought food and cooked our own supper, and bedding was supplied for Tipton. We hoped that we might get a chance of giving our guard the slip during the night, but two of them put this out of the question by keeping awake and talking until dawn. Escape was, however, nearer than we dreamed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### "ALLONS, ENFANTS DE LA PATRIE"

NEXT morning, August 27, we resumed our weary march at six o'clock and continued to ascend the valley, elm, birch, beech and sycamore gradually giving place to pine-trees. Shortly after nine, when we were on a lonely stretch of road not far from the top of the watershed, at a height of about four thousand feet above sea-level, the incredible happened.

The road was built on the side of a hill, with a steep bank, thickly wooded, sloping down on our left. Suddenly, from this wood, bullets came in quick succession, accompanied by loud shouts of *Askar, askar, teslim ol!* (Soldiers, surrender!) The first shot bowled over the man in mufti, whereupon the sergeant of our guard ordered his men to lie down and fire, while Sweet, Bishop and myself, feeling that the road was no place for us, dived into the wood, escape being barred on the other side by the hill. Tipton was riding and could not get away at all. The firing lasted about a minute, and then Bishop and I crept gingerly back on to the road to investigate. Tipton was happily unhurt. One of our guard had been shot dead and three others wounded, one in the head, one in the shoulder, and one in the leg. The range had been less than twelve yards. The whole party had

surrendered, and the unwounded soldiers were standing meekly in a group while their rifles were being collected by four respectably-dressed men from the wood, three of whom were Moslems (two Circassians and one Georgian) and the fourth an Armenian. Although they were assailing more than double their number, the concealment and suddenness of the attack gave them an enormous advantage, and it was hardly surprising that our guards' resistance was perfunctory. Had they shown a little more fight it is more than likely that one of us would have been hit.

This was a staggering change in our fortunes, but at the first blush we had not the slightest idea what to make of it. Were the attackers brigands, and, if so, what fate was in store for ourselves? Bishop afterwards confessed that their faces reminded him of the types one sees portrayed as those of the greatest criminals; but, whoever they might be, it was almost immediately apparent that they were friendly to us. Tipton was pulled off his pony and kissed on both cheeks by one of the Circassians, and the other, who turned out to be the leader of the party, shook us by the hand enthusiastically and exclaimed: "Allons, enfants de la patrie." The French was as unexpected as the bullets, and we began to wonder whether the whole affair was an exciting dream. However, we replied in the same language, only to find that this was the solitary French sentence that they knew. We continued the conversation in such Turkish as we could muster in the absence of Sweet, and what we heard increased our astonishment.

They were not brigands, the leader said, and



THE SINOPE-KASTAMUNI ROAD

they strongly resented being called so. They were political outlaws. Though Turkish subjects, they hated the Young Turk government and were resolved not to fight against the English. They had taken to the mountains with the idea of eventually making their way to the Russians. They called themselves *arqadash* (comrades). He himself, by name Raghīb, had been on his way from Sinope to Kastamuni, to buy ammunition secretly, when he heard of our escape, and being afraid that the gendarmes looking for us might light upon him, he had turned back. Learning that four Germans had been seen near Boyabad he had guessed it was ourselves, and a little later a friendly sergeant of the Sinope gendarmerie told him of our recapture. Thereupon he had determined to rescue us, and had persuaded the other three men, who shared his political views, to join him in an attempt to overtake us. They had done a forced march of over twenty miles on the previous day, reaching at midnight the village in which we were sleeping; and hearing we were there they had pushed on to the top of the pass to select a spot for the ambush. Raghīb's plans had been carefully laid, and (leaving out any question of morals) he thoroughly deserved his success. The whole story was told with great gusto and a full sense of its dramatic value.

What was their object, we asked, in risking their lives on our behalf? Solely, he replied, in order to help us to get to Russia, whither they themselves were bound. He undertook to find a boat, and within a few days we should all embark together.

Before we could consider this proposal, it was necessary to look for Sweet, who had not been seen since the firing began. As soon as the guard surrendered Raghieb had said to them, "I want four officers; if one of them is lost I will kill you;" and all of us, including the soldiers, now began to ransack the wood. We shouted and hunted for over an hour, but without result, and we came to the conclusion that Sweet had taken it for granted that the gunmen were ordinary brigands, and had seized the opportunity to get clear away. It was wretched luck that he should remain in ignorance of the real object of the attack, but having no clue to the direction he had gone we were at last compelled to abandon the search. He was the toughest and the most indefatigable of the party, and was always the first to suggest going on again after a halt. None of us had better earned success than he.

We did not take long to make up our minds to join our new friends. Their motive for rescuing us appeared to be partly a genuine desire to help Englishmen, and partly the knowledge that they would receive a warmer welcome in Russia if they landed with us. Anyhow, to combine with them offered a good chance of getting out of the country, for they would be shot as rebels if they were caught, and were therefore not likely to stick at much in order to escape. There was some discussion as to our fate if we were recaptured in such company; but we all came round to the view that the chance of freedom was too good to be missed. No prisoner who ponders too long upon what may happen will ever get



away. We therefore placed ourselves at Raghib's disposal,\* deeply regretting that Sweet was not there to do the same.

The *arqadash* confiscated all the soldiers' ammunition and six of their rifles, which were captured Russian Mausers. All the animals were left with them, except one which was kept for Tipton, and they were allowed to go back to Chakildagh to fetch a cart for the wounded. We wondered what sort of a yarn the sergeant would spin to his superiors—doubtless an elaborate story of a struggle with a vastly superior force.† Anyhow, he bore us no malice, and said, "Now you will get to your homes." To which we replied, *Inshallah* (If it be God's will). Before he and his men went on their way, our friends tied our arms together with rope (supplied from our own rucksacks while the soldiers were not looking), to give the impression that we were being taken off against our will. This ruse was conceived with the idea, perhaps chimerical, of saving our skins if we were recaptured. When the soldiers were out of sight our bonds were removed.

Our party of seven had now to make its way back to the coast. The sergeant would have to travel twenty-five miles to reach a telegraph office, but as other parties of soldiers or gendarmes might be on the road we decided not to attempt the journey

\* Some time later we asked Raghib what he would have done if we had refused to go with him. He replied that he would have taken us by force; "he was not going to have all that trouble for nothing."

† We heard afterwards that he was not punished, but his commanding officer was reduced in rank for not sending a stronger escort with us.

in daylight, and our deliverers led us back along the road for a few hundred yards to another wood, in which we lay till nightfall. This gave us time to take stock of our new comrades, and to learn their history.

Raghib was a man about forty years old, whose career had been full of adventure. The son of a Circassian refugee from Russia, he had been at school in Constantinople, and then had taken a commission in the gendarmerie. On his father's death he went back to Constantinople, but on the fall of Abdul Hamid II. he was exiled to Rhodes. Returning during the Balkan wars, he joined the opponents of the Committee of Union and Progress, and on the assassination of the Grand Vizier, Shevket Pasha, in 1913, he was arrested for his share in the conspiracy. He was condemned to fifteen years' imprisonment, but after a year and a half he contrived to get this sentence commuted to banishment to Sinope. When war broke out his propaganda against Enver Pasha made Sinope too hot to hold him, and he escaped and collected a number of deserters around him. He had been living as an outlaw in the hills for eight months before he rescued us, and was evidently a man of unbounded resolution. It is a tradition in Russia that a Circassian is happiest when killing a Russian, but the Turks say that he is willing to kill anyone at a moment's notice. Nevertheless, Raghib was full of solicitude for our welfare, and could not do enough for us. We called him Father, to his great delight, and once when Bishop expostulated with him for being a little fussy, Raghib fervently kissed him and declared that everything he did was for us.



THE ESCAPERS, WITH THREE OF THEIR FOUR RESCUERS

Considering what he had already been through, and the continuing peril of his position, it was perhaps natural for him to be excitable, highly strung, and somewhat garrulous.

The other three were farmers from the neighbourhood of Sinope, and men of considerable means, though all their immovable property had, of course, been confiscated. Keork, the oldest, a man of thirty-five, though he looked fifty-five, was an Armenian. A strange comrade for three Moslems, but he was much the handiest member of the party in the accomplishments useful to an outlaw. Musa, the other Circassian, was a giant with a great sense of humour and a placid temperament, which was a useful corrective to Raghib's. Kiamil, the Georgian, was a silent little fellow who had been a sergeant-major in the Turkish Army. All these men had left homes, wives and children, and had joined Raghib, in order to avoid military service in a cause they detested. They had been in conflict with gendarmes on several occasions and had rescued a number of men taken prisoner for desertion from the army.

Raghib and Kiamil were armed with Australian soldiers' Lee-Enfields, bought from a Turk who picked them up in Gallipoli; Musa and Keork with Turkish Martinis which they now exchanged for Russian Mausers taken from our escort. Their custom was to have a round always in the chamber, with the bolt not pushed home, and as they might have to fight for their lives at any moment it was a daily care, never neglected, to see that each cartridge in their bandoliers was clean and not too loose. Each man carried a Caucasian knife with a

sharp-pointed, double-edged blade more than a foot long; an instrument indispensable to a backwoodsman.

As we talked, our friends were summing us up, but the only one who really counted with them was Tipton. He was six feet three, his career as a flying man (they had never seen an aeroplane) clothed him with romance, and he had unfailing good-humour and a smile which captured all their hearts. He miraculously recovered from his illness almost immediately after the rescue, and became the life and soul of the party. A joke which never surfeited them was their prophecy that he would be taken prisoner once more when he rejoined the Flying Corps, and would again be sent to Kastamuni.

The rest of the day passed without incident. Two of the comrades went off to fill our water-bottles in the valley, then, as on all occasions, announcing their return by clapping their hands. At dusk Raghib, Musa and Kiamil went off towards Boyabad to meet some more outlaws who were to join our party, and to collect money for the journey, while Keork was detailed to conduct us to a hiding-place near the coast. We wore our fezes once more, and each of us carried one of the rifles which had been taken from the soldiers. This night's march proved the most trying we had known since we left Kastamuni. Though Keork was carrying two rifles and four bandoliers full of ammunition, he kept us moving for nine hours at a fast pace, with only half a dozen halts of five minutes each. The night was dark, but he hardly hesitated once about the route, which lay along rough tracks or paths

and streams and stream-beds full of boulders, down the valley we had ascended during the two previous days. It was very heavy and treacherous going, and we all took some pretty bad tosses. Bishop put his knee out and found great difficulty in carrying on, and Tipton and I carried his rifle by turns. Whenever we halted, Keork assured us we had only one more hour to go. Towards dawn we roused a number of exceptionally strident dogs in a village, and a shot was fired in our direction. Our guide was nervous about gendarmes, and we were all very glad when, in an extreme stage of fatigue, we reached a hiding-place in a wood and were told we were to rest there for the day. It was said to be two hours from the coast, and once again England seemed very near.

We fell asleep at once, but the indefatigable Keork went off for food, to reappear with a splendid breakfast of fried eggs, *yoghourt*, milk, cheese and bread, which he had obtained from a friend at a farmhouse close by.

We remained in the wood till after sunset. Several people passed, and one man gave us an anxious half-hour by picking wild plums only a few yards away, but we were not discovered. At eight in the evening we were taken to the farm which had supplied our breakfast, and were given another meal in an orchard. A bright and intelligent Circassian boy, named Aziz, now joined us. He was only fifteen, but thoroughly understood the use of firearms, and an antique Greek rifle which he carried was exchanged for one of the Mausers taken from the soldiers. At ten o'clock we went on for a quarter of a mile to a sleeping-

place that had been prepared in a field of maize, eight feet high, which hid us completely. During the night another Circassian, named Tahsin, joined the party.

Next day Keork and Aziz were busy repairing their bandoliers, and we got nothing to eat till one o'clock. We wished to pay for food, but all our offers were flatly refused by the *urqadash*, who said they did not wish to be mistaken for brigands. The whole time we were with them, they treated us with the most generous hospitality and kindness. The food—always obtained from sympathisers in adjoining farms—consisted at this period of vegetables, fruit and unleavened bread, with occasional eggs, butter and milk.

Our bivouac was not as secret as could be desired, and in the evening we moved on for two hours to a new hiding-place in a wood which was, unfortunately, full of mosquitoes. We passed the German wireless station on the way, and in the moonlight saw the sea once again. A new adherent who guided us brought news that Enver Pasha, being particularly annoyed by the alliance of British prisoners with a Turkish convict, had telegraphed that no effort was to be spared to capture us, dead or alive, and the forces detailed for the task included 500 soldiers from Kastamuni, 300 from Samsun, 200 from Sinope, and others from Changri and Angora, as well as about 200 gendarmes from Ineboli, Sinope and Kastamuni. Probably these figures exaggerated the facts.

On the fifth day after our rescue Raghīb and Musa rejoined us with yet another recruit, an Anatolian Turk (the only one in the party), whom

we called the Fat Boy. From Boyabad Raghīb had sent a message to a Circassian friend of his in Kastamuni, suggesting that he should join us and bring any British officers who cared to accompany him; but news came back that he had previously left the town. Plans for a boat were proceeding well. Raghīb had arranged with a Georgian at Sinope for a vessel to put in near Shakir Oghlu, the point at which we had left the coast for Kastamuni after our recapture. As the date for embarkation could not yet be fixed, it was thought desirable to continue changing our hiding-place from time to time, and in the evening we went on to another wood some miles away. Raghīb, who announced his intention of accompanying us to England from Russia, now began to study English.

Early next morning a stranger stumbled upon us in the wood, but the comrades persuaded him that it was not to his interest to take any notice of what he saw. A thunderstorm occurred on this day, but our friends, always concerned for our comfort, rigged up a shelter with our sail and the branches of trees. At dusk we sought fresh cover in a maize field belonging to a Greek farmer, who was to hide and feed us until the time came to embark. When we got near his house we had to wait for two hours until some Turkish visitors departed, and it was eleven o'clock before food was forthcoming. Under orders from Raghīb, who thought the hard ground was not good enough for us, he also brought out bedding. Unfortunately, it was full of several kinds of vermin.

We remained for nearly a week close to the



house of this Greek, who brought us bread and vegetables twice a day, and on one occasion produced a sheep. It was the first meat we had tasted for a fortnight. We asked him to get eggs for us, but he was as poor as a rat and did not like to arouse suspicion by buying such luxuries. A messenger was, however, sent to Sinope on our behalf, and he returned with playing-cards, cognac, and tobacco. The cards relieved the monotony of the long days, and we found that Raghib played picquet. Our only literature was a copy of St. John's Gospel, the margin of which was used for a diary, and a few pages of the "Pickwick Papers."

All the *argadash* except Raghib dispersed to prepare food for the voyage, and before long Raghib himself left us, to meet the owner of the boat and make final arrangements. We spent the day washing and mending our clothes. Late at night Raghib returned with Kiamil, whom we had not seen since the day of our rescue. They brought very satisfactory news. A sailing-boat of about three and a half tons had been hired, was being overhauled in Sinope, and within four days would be ready, three hours' march away. There would be thirteen passengers besides ourselves, and a crew of five. The boat would make for Trebizond (east) or Sevastopol (north), according as the wind served. One thousand roubles in Russian paper-money (then worth about £40) was to be paid to the captain when we reached the Russians. This sum, in the form of hundred-rouble notes, had already been obtained from various friends along the Turkish coast, at the rate

of five roubles for a Turkish paper pound. Raghib would listen to no suggestion from us that we should pay a share.

The next three days passed without incident. At sunset on the third, Raghib went off to meet his comrades, and he returned at midnight with the news that we were to march at once. Thenceforth we slept on the ground, which was, at any rate, clean. Unfortunately, it was too late to undo the mischief, and though we worked hard for several hours every morning and evening trying to get rid of our late bedfellows and their progeny, they continued to flourish. The only philosophy which their presence inspired was that in the long idle days they gave us something to do. On studying the habits of the louse we found that he makes his home in the seams of one's underclothes, on the side next the skin; and that by turning these inside out, or vice versa, we could keep him busy for quite a long time in making his way round again, to the detriment of his ordinary business.

Within a short distance of our hiding-place we found ten *arqadash* assembled, with a pony carrying bread, flour, and honey for the voyage, but as the boat was not yet ready we hid ourselves once again in a wood. Sentries were posted, for the first time, to give warning of the approach of any stranger.

The comrades brought exciting news. On the previous morning eight of them, while collecting food in a village some miles further south, had been surrounded by a party of gendarmes said to number ninety, and had been obliged to cut

their way out. During the fighting one of our friends—our guide of a few nights before—and one gendarme had been killed, but their deaths were regarded as no great matter.

One man brought the melancholy tidings that Sweet had been recaptured. What happened is recorded in his diary given to me long afterwards. He had none of our luck. As we had conjectured, he thought that the men in the wood who opened fire on our guard were aiming at us also, and he decided that the best thing to do was to get clear away; he ran too far to join up with us again, and indeed did not even attempt to get back to the road on which we waited for him. His rucksack was on one of the ponies, and as he had no food with him his position was almost desperate, but he pluckily made his way down to the coast, a little to the west of Sinope. On the day after his disappearance he actually lay in hiding, had we but known it, close to the German wireless station, within a mile of the spot where we were taking cover with Keork. On the third night he crept into the sea for a bathe, and a party of soldiers caught sight of him and seized him. He was shockingly treated. They had a deep-rooted conviction that he possessed some gold, and when he denied it they first beat him and then held lighted resinous pine splinters between his fingers, until he fainted. When he came to, he heard them discussing whether they should not shoot him, to prevent him from reporting their conduct, but on his promising to say nothing they decided to spare his life.

He was taken back to Kastamuni by devious

paths under a guard of seventy soldiers, and it must have been some slight consolation to him to know that he was keeping so many Turks employed. At Kastamuni he was led in procession through the town, and sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment in the civil gaol at Angora, where he was herded with ordinary criminals. Afterwards he was sent to the prisoners of war camp at Yozgad, and there, just before the armistice, he died of influenza. He was a brave man who deserved a better fate.\*

After a day in the wood we returned to the rendezvous of the previous evening to await the arrival of the fourth of our original rescuers, and when he turned up at midnight the party was complete. Besides ourselves there were twelve men, all deserters from the army except Raghib, and all armed with rifles and begirt with much ammunition in belts and bandoliers. Marching for four hours, we reached, just before dawn, a new hiding-place close to the point where the boat was

\* General Townshend writes as follows of Sweet's D.S.O. :

"The enemy then installed themselves close to the water's edge and fired on our bridge of boats. As there was a danger of their forcing their way across the bridge, I ordered it to be destroyed under cover of darkness by explosives. It was successfully demolished by Lieutenant Sweet and Lieutenant Matthews, who volunteered for what appeared to be certain death. The enemy had the bridge at the mercy of their rifles at 300 to 400 yards' range, and were firing down on to it; but the two officers went to the enemy's side of the river, across the bridge, which had sagged in places owing to water-logged pontoons, and laid the *saucisson*. With the explosion the bridge broke up. I recommended the two officers for the Victoria Cross, and I am convinced that it has never been more fairly or squarely won. They waited all day in cold blood to carry out the operation at night—a very different proceeding from doing it on the spur of the moment."

to meet us. A friendly farmer turned out to show us the way, and flour was given to his wife to bake, while he himself was despatched to Sinope to ascertain from the boat-owner that everything was ready for embarkation that night.

When the messenger returned shortly before dark, he remained in secret conclave with Raghib and the other leading members of the party for over an hour, and we saw that something had gone wrong. At length we were told the bitter news that the whole scheme had to be abandoned. Enver Pasha had now telegraphed that no boat was to approach any point on the coast without notice to the authorities, and that every vessel on arrival was to be hauled up on shore, and the oars, rudder, and sail deposited with the police, until permission had been given to put to sea. At the same time the number of men guarding the coast was greatly increased. These strict measures were prompted by the recent fight between the gendarmes and the *argadash*, which showed that we were still in the neighbourhood of Sinope.

When all this was explained to us we thought it only right to offer to withdraw from the party and give ourselves up; for it was possible that the government, having recaptured us, would relax its control over boats, and so make it easier for our friends to escape. We pointed out to them that recapture was a hanging matter for them, but only meant a few months in prison for us. They were fully aware of this, but would not listen for a moment to any such proposal. We and they would escape or be captured together. They would rather lose their lives than their honour,

and would not leave us while one of them remained alive. Although no boat was obtainable from Sinope, they had other plans, and sympathisers at various points would provide food until another boat could be secured. It was proposed to march that very night towards Aianjik, a village west of Sinope, where the government precautions might be less strict. Failing Aianjik, they would turn east again and look for a boat near Samsun.

We took our friends at their word and determined to remain in their company, though rather pessimistic as to the outcome, and doubtful whether we, to say nothing of our boots, were strong enough for many more long night marches. Kiamil, upon whose person all the wealth of the party had been concealed, now divided it up again, and we set off once more, the pony carrying the provisions and our rucksacks. Fences on our route were frequently broken down to enable the animal to get through, but no attempt was made to repair them, our friends having no very high opinion of the detective department of the gendarmerie. After marching all night, mainly along a river-bed full of painfully loose stones, we bivouacked in a wood on the banks of a stream.

At the end of the day we packed up once more and had another full night's march, finding shelter at dawn in some thick brushwood saturated with dew. In the evening Raghib and four others went off towards Aianjik to pursue the search for a boat, while the rest of us, with the pony, marched through very hilly country into the depths of a thick forest. On the way we saw fires all over the countryside and heard many voices uttering weird

cries. Nearly every field had a perch for a man, and the object of both the illumination and the shouting was to scare away the wild pig which attack the crops. When we said that pig was good to eat, our friends were incredulous, but undertook to shoot one for us. Unfortunately this promise never took shape.

The forest, known as Elek Dagh, was of wide extent, with undergrowth of almost tropical density, and made an ideal hiding-place. During the whole time we had been with the *arqadash* it had been necessary to speak with bated breath, for fear of being overheard by a passing stranger, but now we were able to resume ordinary tones. That this forest, near to the coast and rich in oak, beech, walnut and spruce, has never been exploited is presumably due to the lack of roads and the blight of Turkish rule.

We lay for a week waiting for news from Aianjik. Heavy rain fell. Some sort of a shelter was rigged up with our sail, but it was very thin and far from watertight. We thought it safe, however, for the first time, to light a fire, and a blaze twenty feet long was maintained day and night, fed by dead trees, of which there was an inexhaustible supply. Our friends were past masters of woodcraft, and when the rain began they moved the fire under a tree and managed to keep it going through the heaviest downpour. We spent alternate hours in getting wet and drying ourselves. Tipton, though he had recovered from his first illness, began to suffer a good deal from an abscess on his chest, and Bishop and I got septic sores on our hands. Time passed slowly.

The forest was not entirely deserted, and we were visited by several local inhabitants who were friends of the *argadash*, including a couple of soldiers and a mounted man said to be a gendarme officer on leave. He must have known beforehand, or very soon found out, that we were escaping English officers; but as he appeared to accept a band of armed outlaws as a matter of course, he was not likely to make trouble about us. On the contrary, he kept the whole party supplied with food. Occasionally he brought us mutton, potatoes, butter, honey, treacle, eggs, cucumbers, or pears; but unleavened bread was often the only item on the menu. Unfortunately, meals were very irregular, and we sometimes ate much more at a sitting than we needed, because we never knew when the next food would be forthcoming. Our friends had only one small stewpot, and we had only two field canteens, so that cooking for a large party was not an easy business. Twice when a sheep was secured it was roasted whole, two Y-shaped posts being driven into the ground before the fire, to support a pole which was slowly revolved with the carcass tied to it, while all available containers were spread underneath to catch the dripping. Having gorged themselves with mutton, our friends seemed to require no further food for fully forty-eight hours.

We had now been missing from Kastamuni for six weeks, and we heard afterwards that the Dutch Minister in Constantinople, who had charge of British interests, was just beginning to inquire at the Turkish War Office about our health and the place of our internment. He received the artless



reply that there was "no record" of the camp in which we were.

At last Raghib returned, and with splendid news. He had bought a boat from a Turk for £400, to be paid in gold, of which our friends seemed to have plenty, including many English sovereigns. The crew had not been told of the sale, and when, under orders from the owner, they put in to the shore near our hiding-place "to ship brushwood," they were to be seized and tied up to trees while we pushed off. The coast near Aianjik was not guarded with much strictness, and no difficulty was anticipated.

That afternoon we roasted and ate a final sheep, and at dusk the pony was loaded up with bread and we quitted the forest. After marching for eight hours we bivouacked at 3.30 a.m. in a clump of bushes within five minutes of the beach, about thirty miles west of Sinope and five miles east of Aianjik. We had covered about 150 miles since recapture, and about 350 miles since leaving Kastamuni—figures which nobody seeing our boots would have disputed. All that day we had to keep very quiet to avoid detection by passers-by, and the sentry was doubled. In the evening a man was sent away to interview the boat-owner, and Raghib told us to sleep peacefully; he would wake us when the boat arrived.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BLACK SEA

WHEN we woke just before dawn nobody was stirring, and we feared that Raghib's plans had again miscarried. It was not so. As it grew light a boat was seen to be lying inshore, about half a mile from our hiding-place. It had arrived during the night, unknown to our friends, and even a fire which the crew had lit on the beach had escaped observation. Without a moment's delay we hurried down, and the *arqadash*, in accordance with the programme, seized the crew, who offered no resistance, and tied them up to trees. The vessel was a fishing-boat, twenty-five feet long, and of about two and a half tons, with dipping lug-sail and four oars—the sort of craft known in the Mediterranean as a *felucca*.

A stream ran into the sea a few yards away, and we filled our three water-bottles, together with a four-gallon tin and a three-gallon cask which we found in the boat. We also put as much water as we could into our air-cushion, but most of it leaked out before we could drink it.

Every minute on the beach was dangerous in daylight, but it was absolutely necessary, before we embarked, to ballast our boat with stones from the shore. Before this task could be completed, a soldier with a rifle appeared from a house to the

west—which we had thought deserted—and began to ask questions. We lost no time in arguing, but disarmed him, and tied him too to a tree, where he remained quite passively, consoled by the gift of a gold lira. We heard afterwards that he was the advance man of a patrol of ten coming from Aianjik, and that when he reported what had happened motor-boats armed with machine-guns were sent out from Ineboli, Samsun, and Sinope to look for us.

Just after sunrise everything was ready, and we pushed off. There were fourteen of us on board—seven Circassians, two Georgians, one Anatolian Turk, one Armenian, and three Englishmen. All our friends were Turkish subjects, and the fact that they represented four different races bore testimony to the universal unpopularity of the Ottoman government.

While we had been embarking, another felucca, somewhat bigger than ours, had been creeping along the coast from the west, and we decided to anticipate any attempt she might make to stop us. Accordingly, all the weapons were hidden while we quietly pulled alongside, when our friends suddenly jumped up and levelled their rifles, in true pirate fashion, at the crew of five. They were unarmed (except the captain, who had a pistol) and surrendered at once. The boat was on her way to Samsun with a cargo of Rumanian kerosene, and as she belonged to the enemy we decided to take both her and her crew with us. Two of the *arqadash*, and in the evening two more, were therefore placed on board as prize crew, while the captain and one of his men were transferred to our



**THE BOAT**  
(Photographed at Sevastopol)

boat. Being escaping prisoners ourselves, we enjoyed having prisoners of our own, but it is doubtful whether the captured crew saw the humorous side of their position.

Both vessels now hoisted sail, and as a splendid five-knot breeze was blowing from the east we decided to make for the Crimea, not for Trebizond, although it was risky to attempt to cross the treacherous Black Sea in so small a boat, especially at the equinox. Within a few minutes we were out of rifle range of the beach, and within a couple of hours we must have been out of sight. There was no indication of any pursuit, and we felt pretty safe from interference by the Turkish authorities, while the chance of meeting a German submarine seemed too remote to worry about. On the other hand, we hoped with any luck to meet a vessel belonging to the Allies, and we did not learn till afterwards that ships proceeding to or from Batum or Trebizond did not usually cross the Black Sea, but crept round the coast, for fear of submarines. A German submarine actually passed athwart our course a few days later.

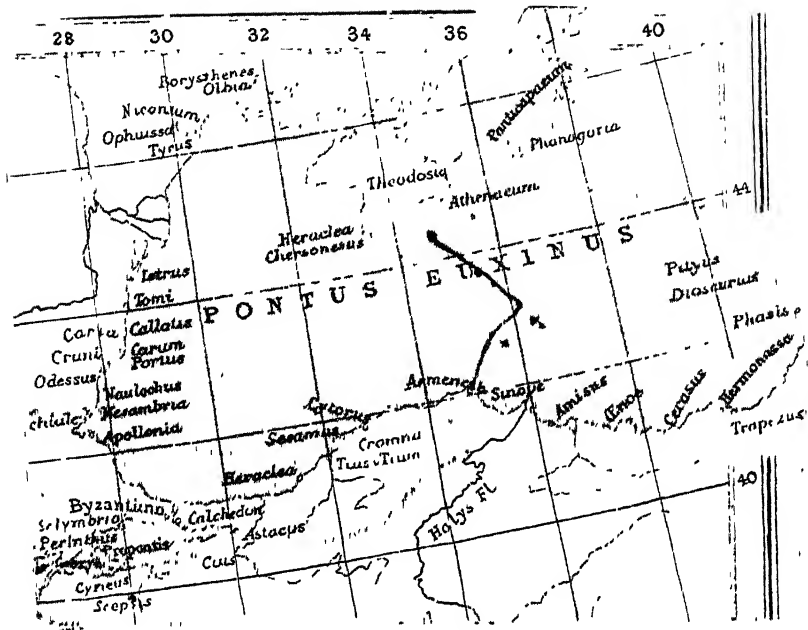
Our chief anxiety was for our own boat. She was very old and had to be baled out frequently; the boom was badly sprung, and repairs to the sail and rigging were much overdue. Nevertheless, everything held fast, and we made excellent progress during the morning. The sea was rather rough, and several of our friends lay at the bottom of the boat throughout the day, refusing to eat or drink and calling upon Allah to relieve their misery. In the afternoon the wind dropped and rowing became necessary—an office which we

made our prisoners undertake. In the evening we again had a breeze, and before sunset the blue mountains of Anatolia disappeared from view. We were not sorry to see the last of them. Strabo mentions\* that these mountains and those of the Crimea can be seen simultaneously from the deck of a ship, but we ourselves were over fifty hours out of sight of land.

Our only modern map of the Black Sea, printed in Turkish, had been confiscated at Gerze, but I had managed to retain a tiny map, on the scale of 200 miles to an inch, taken from the Public Schools Classical Atlas sent to Kastamuni from London under the Prisoners of War Book Scheme. It showed the Greek colonies 500 years before Christ, and therefore did not mark Sevastopol, but it told us that the Crimea was slightly west of north from the point where we embarked. When, however, the captain of the captured crew, who volunteered to navigate us to Sevastopol, was placed at the helm we found that he steered north-east, and some of the *arqadash* who had nautical experience insisted that this was the right course. With our limited knowledge of Turkish we did not understand the reasons they gave, and at first did not venture to interfere.

Our compasses had also been taken from us at Gerze, and by day we had only the sun to steer by: no easy matter, though calculations with a watch were somewhat simplified by the fact that it was the equinox. When night fell we were astonished to find that neither our friends nor any of the other boat's crew, not even the captain, had any idea of

\* VII. iv. 3.



MAP OF BLACK SEA  
Showing approximate course

steering by the stars. They did not even know which was the north star. Some of them had been at sea all their lives, but only in craft which hugged the coast; at night, out of sight of land, they were completely lost. We determined to take control. With our limited supply of food and water it was essential that we should hit the Crimean peninsula, and after estimating as well as we could the distance we had already come to the north-east, we resolved to steer north-north-west, as near as we could judge it. There were loud protests from our friends, who had got it into their heads that if we went west of north we should reach Rumania and be captured by the Germans, but after a great deal of argument Tipton succeeded in winning their obedience. Having had sailing experience on the Mersey he was put in command, and the three of us kept watches to ensure that the helmsman stuck to the course we had laid down. Whether north-north-west would bring us to the Crimea time would show. There were several unknown factors—the currents, the boat's leeway, and her position when we changed course. We could only hope that our luck would not desert us in the last lap.

About midnight the wind dropped, and we had to row for the remainder of the night. Next morning we were again making good progress under a breeze from the north-east when the other boat began to make signals of distress, and we at once lowered our sail and rowed to her assistance. As we drew alongside, our three prisoners aboard her were making as much hullabaloo as if she were sinking, but the trouble was only a broken rudder.



Her captain did not consider it possible to make a new one or to steer her with an oar, and to save a long argument we decided to abandon one of the two vessels. The captured boat was much the better of the two, but as it was found impossible to fit our rudder in her stern-post we decided to take everybody along in our boat and to appropriate her boom. The change was duly carried out, and our old boom thrown overboard. Several bags of grain and flour and a keg containing about two gallons of fresh water were also transhipped, together with a pump, which saved us the labour of baling. The other boat, with her cargo of kerosene, was left to her fate, and there was little doubt that she would founder before long.

Our own boat now carried nineteen persons, and most of the ballast was thrown overboard. The wind again dropped, and our speed for the rest of the day did not exceed two knots. Throughout the second night there was practically no wind at all, and the boat was rowed the whole time, most of the work being again done by our prisoners. Next day, the third of the voyage, there was no improvement in the weather, and the rowing continued. The Black Sea, so called by the Turks, was living up to its earlier Greek name only too successfully.

Our bread had become mouldy, and in the evening some maize flour taken from the captured boat was boiled with sea-water into a sort of porridge, on a fire made with our own boat's floorboards, resting on what was left of the stone ballast. Salt water is all right, at a pinch, for boiling food in, and the concoction was much

preferred to the bread, although it did not go very far towards removing the pangs of hunger. We were also able to distribute a few malted-milk tablets that we had reserved for the voyage, but they had agglomerated into a mass as hard as a rock, and several teeth were broken in the effort to gnaw nourishment from it.

We had enough flour to ward off starvation for several days, but the water-supply gave anxiety. By the third evening the tin, the keg transferred from the other boat, two of the three water-bottles, and the air-cushion were all empty. The cask which remained would only provide a pint and a quarter for each person, and we decided to introduce a strict ration system which would make the supply last for three days more.

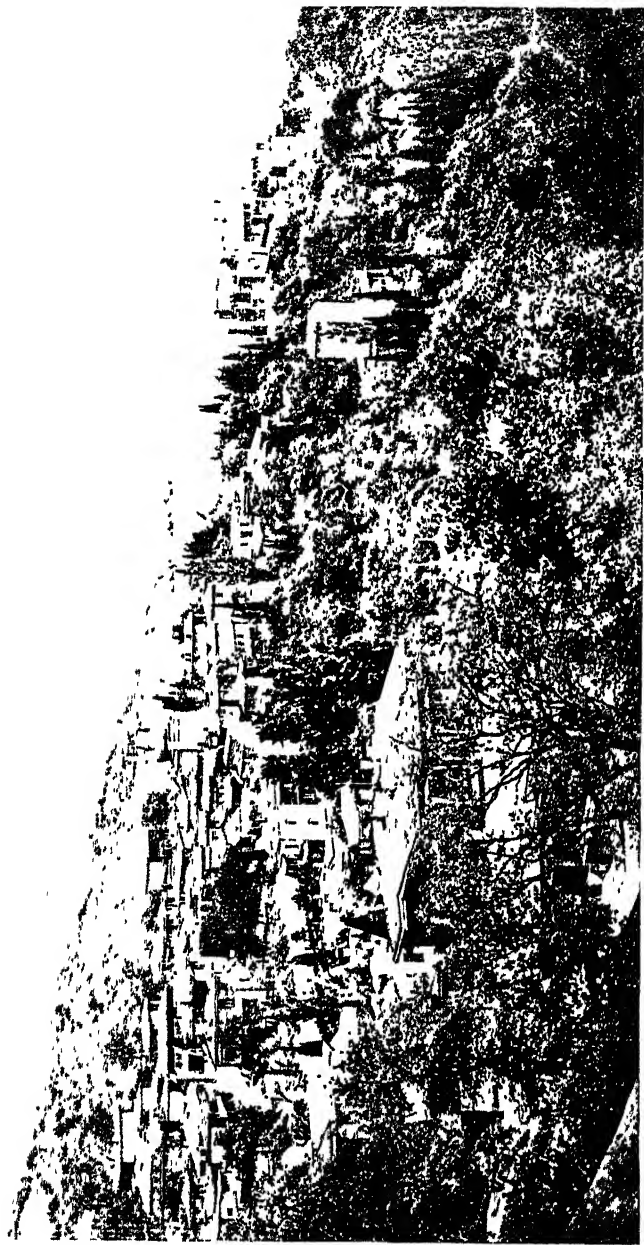
Just as it was getting dark on this third day we sighted to the north-west what looked like a line of mountains, but we could not be absolutely certain they were not clouds, and night fell before we could get near enough to resolve our doubts. A good breeze sprang up at seven o'clock and we made excellent progress until 3 a.m., when the wind again dropped and rowing was resumed.

At dawn on the fourth day hope became certainty with the definite appearance of a line of hills on the north-west horizon. Our luck had held. The captured crew, who cherished an idea that they would be sent back to Turkey, and were quite as eager as any of us to land in Russia, redoubled their efforts at the oars, and everybody was given a good drink and the run—such as it was—of his teeth. The most excited people on board were the *arqadash*, who, although several hours

must elapse before they could reach the shore, immediately began to don their bandoliers. We had some difficulty in convincing them that if we tried to land in Russia with too ostentatious a display of rifles and ammunition, we might just possibly be mistaken for invaders.

Before long, houses were seen, and we steered for the nearest. At 12.30 p.m., after a voyage of three and a quarter days, and on the forty-ninth day after leaving Kastamuni, we grounded on the beach of a town which was evidently a watering-place, and which turned out to be Alupka, on the east coast of the Crimea, about thirty miles south-east of Sevastopol. It was virtually the nearest point in Russia to the place at which we had embarked, and our rough reckoning had not been far out. By the course we had followed our sea journey had covered about 250 miles. Apart from a few boats hugging the Anatolian or Crimean coast, we had seen no vessels of any sort. Quite possibly it was through steering north-east on the first day that we avoided the Turkish motor-boats sent out to look for us, just as by going east from Kastamuni we had eluded the pursuit on land.

Alupka is not a port, and there was no guard on the beach to question us, the arrival of a vessel being an unlooked-for event. In Kastamuni we learned the Russian for "British prisoners," and we shouted out *Anglisky plenny* on approaching the shore, but as so often happens when an Englishman tries to speak the language of the country he is visiting, the reply came in perfect English, from a man bathing in the sea.



ALUPKA

Opposite the point at which we disembarked were the municipal baths. Ever since leaving Kastamuni, what we had been looking forward to most eagerly was not good food or drink, linen sheets, or European society, but a *hot bath*, and within half an hour of landing we were lying in the first we had known for seven weeks, and had discarded for ever our filthy rags and tattered boots. Clean clothes were generously provided by a member of the staff of the American Embassy in Petrograd, and by others who saw us, and nothing could have exceeded the cordiality with which most of the Russians welcomed us. One of them said that we had been very lucky to strike Alupka; if we had approached the shore a little further east we should have arrived at one of the estates in which the Grand Dukes were being guarded by soldiers, who had orders to fire on any one approaching from the sea.

Unlike the other inhabitants, the military commandant at Alupka was in serious doubt whether we were English or German. We were kept under surveillance by a soldier with fixed bayonet, who deprived us of some Caucasian knives presented to us as souvenirs by our Turkish friends, and we had to submit to a *procès-verbal* at the hands of the French-speaking daughter of the commissioner of police. The commandant was, of course, quite justified in taking these precautions, for he had only our word for it that we were English, and the men in whose company we had arrived were *prima facie* enemies. They also were kept under guard, in the central police building, but we were allowed to visit them. Everything

was soon put right by the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, who telegraphed for the whole party to be sent to Sevastopol, his headquarters.

We left Alupka the day after we landed, and went first by motor to Yalta, a large watering-place and small port ten miles to the east. Carriages were provided for the *argadash*, but Raghīb, who was not unnaturally anxious to assert his title to treatment as an officer, refused to share a carriage with any of his men, and paid for a separate one for himself. At Yalta we were summoned to a meeting of the local soviet, to receive the congratulations of the soldiers and workmen, and we went on by naval transport to Sevastopol, where luxurious quarters in the *Almaz*, formerly an imperial yacht, were given to us. The photograph at page 124 was taken soon afterwards, but the new clothes seen in it give us an appearance very different from the ragged and filthy spectacle we presented when we landed in Russia.

We were sorry for the five Turks taken prisoner. They had been captured by their own countrymen within a short distance of their own coast, and had lost their boat and cargo; but we could do little for them, and they were interned by the Russians.

## CHAPTER X

### IN RUSSIA AFTER THE REVOLUTION

THE Tsar had been deposed seven months earlier, but under the Provisional Government of Kerensky Russia was still our ally, and the British Admiralty had a liaison officer in the Black Sea—Engineer-Commander Le Page, who made our path smooth and our days pleasant. Through him we at once represented to the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Fleet that there was no military reason why all the 120 British officers and 80 British sailors and soldiers in captivity at Kastamuni should not be kidnapped from the Turks and brought across to Russia. Although we ourselves had chosen an indirect route to the sea which involved a cross-country march of about two hundred miles, a much shorter way was available. A road passable for motors led from Kastamuni due north to the small port of Ineboli, a distance of only sixty miles. If sufficient motor transport were landed, the whole of the British prisoners might be brought down to the coast in a single night, and as the Russians had undisputed command of the Black Sea the rest would be easy. The only Turkish forces capable of opposition were less than a thousand soldiers and gendarmes at Ineboli and Kastamuni—all either elderly or very young men; and any resistance they might attempt could be

overcome by the fire of a destroyer and a few machine-guns on land. The country between the two towns was thinly populated, and the inhabitants were not likely to give trouble, though it would be necessary to post small pickets on the bridges. Finally, the force guarding the prisoners at Kastamuni was about one hundred old men, whom the prisoners themselves would, we knew, be prepared to disarm if they had a few hours' notice. Details of the scheme could be sent secretly to them through our outlaw friends. Failing motors, cavalry with spare horses could do the job, though the time required would be longer, and there would be some risk of the prisoners being moved further inland before the rescue party could reach Kastamuni.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea was Admiral Niemetz, who had succeeded Koltchak three months before, when that officer threw his sword into the sea rather than carry out the policy of the Revolutionary Committee. The Admiral listened sympathetically to our plan, and told us that a similar scheme had actually been worked out by his staff some time before we arrived, but its execution had been postponed, partly for lack of precise information concerning the strength and disposition of the Turkish forces, and partly because it was intended to combine the rescue of British prisoners with a raid on barracks and other buildings near the Anatolian coast. We were able to supplement the Russian intelligence about the forces likely to be encountered, and we urged that as the weather would soon be too cold for sleeping out at night prompt action was essential. After



some discussion Admiral Niemetz promised to carry out the scheme as soon as sanction could be obtained from Petrograd. He asked that one of us should stay behind to accompany the landing party, and it was decided that I should remain in Russia for this purpose. But in order not to attract too much attention from the many German spies in the Crimea, it was arranged that the three of us should first proceed to Petrograd, as if we were all going home.

Before we could start, a telegram arrived from the British Mission at Mohileff, the Russian General Headquarters (commonly called Stavka), ordering us to report ourselves there. Cross-country railway journeys being slow and difficult, our best route seemed to be from Sevastopol to Odessa by sea and thence via Kieff to Mohileff, especially as the *Almaz*, in which we were living, was herself going to Odessa. Her sailing was, however, postponed in consequence of a report that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were at sea, and we spent the interval on visits to various ships in the fleet, from which we learned a good deal about the progress of the Revolution.

Sevastopol was far from the storm-centre of Russia, but there were indications that the Provisional Government was by no means firmly established, and that the first effect of Kerensky's magnetic oratory had almost disappeared. The murder of about forty naval officers in the Baltic had not, so far, been imitated in the Black Sea, but every ship and regiment was already the prey of Bolshevik agitators. At a meeting of bluejackets of the whole fleet, resolutions were passed demanding

that all power be entrusted to committees of sailors, soldiers, workmen, and peasants; that all officers and *bourgeois* resisting the Revolution be arrested, and all newspapers unfavourable to it suppressed; that the censorship be abolished (this was not quite consistent with the preceding resolution); that all "agents of foreign imperialism" be expelled; that an eight-hour working day be introduced; that commissions in the navy and army be given only to the rank and file; that the death sentence in both services be abolished; and that peace be made forthwith.

Early in October a red flag inscribed "Long live the Democratic Republic of Federated States" was hoisted by many ships in the fleet. On the same day came the report that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were at sea, and the staff at once ordered two dreadnoughts and two destroyers to go out to look for them. The crews of these four vessels were celebrating the hoisting of the red flag, and jumped to the conclusion that the order was a ruse for putting an end to the festivities. Accordingly, they refused to sail; whereupon Admiral Niemetz, who was frankly afraid of his men, postponed the time for carrying out the order until the evening!

This was not the only sign of the destruction of discipline which inevitably followed Kerensky's policy of pandering to the committees. At sea, watch and look-out were indifferently kept, in spite of the danger from submarines. In harbour, the ships were never cleaned, no drills were held, and the men spent half the day on the quarter-deck listening to the frothy orations of politicians

from the Baltic (who were undoubtedly subsidised from German funds), or reading the posters with which the barbettes were plastered. Saluting was a thing of the past, except between officers, and both seamen and soldiers addressed their officers as *Tovarish* (Comrade). It was quite usual to see men monopolising the seats in a boat, while their officers were standing, and I saw the Commander-in-Chief compelled, on landing from his launch at the principal jetty, to shoulder his way through a crowd of bluejackets, who took not the slightest notice of him. Officers were treated with somewhat more respect at sea, for every man then realised that his life was in their hands.

The sailors of the Black Sea Fleet were not, however, united. Some crews were opposed to extreme measures, and one day, when a pogrom was threatened in Sevastopol, they landed patrols and announced that if disorder occurred guns would be turned upon the naval barracks, the hotbed of sedition. On another occasion, after a destroyer had sunk a Turkish destroyer, the crew of one of the dreadnoughts passed a resolution condemning the action as undemocratic and threatening to punish a repetition of such conduct; whereupon the crew of the destroyer retorted sarcastically that next time they were escorting the dreadnought and met a German submarine they would not fire upon her!

The extremists attached importance to the destruction of all concrete reminders of the old régime. Statues of Tsars were boarded up, imperial portraits were removed from all men-of-war, and imperial emblems were cut away from

the uniforms preserved in the Sevastopol Museum since the Crimean War. It was said that in some churches the prayer for peace was amended by adding the words "without annexations or indemnities," and even that such expressions as "King David" and "the Kingdom of Heaven" were made more democratic.

Food was much more plentiful in the Crimea than in North Russia, and white bread was still made, but prices were already ten times the pre-war rates. Although the harvest had been gathered, many peasants refused to sell their grain and other produce because they were unable to buy anything with the money, both imports and manufactures being practically at a standstill. Clothes were almost unobtainable, and as the uniforms in which we had escaped were in rags we had to depend on Russian charity for loans of mufti. One chief cause of the rise in prices was, of course, the depreciation of the paper currency; at the Imperial Mint, where 750 men had sufficed for the coinage of money before the war, 15,000 were said to be now engaged in printing it.

The report about the *Goeben* and *Breslau* turned out to be false, and we left Sevastopol in the *Almaz* on October 4, arriving at Odessa next morning. Men-of-war in the harbour were flying the red flag only, but when they found that we were still flying the St. Andrew's ensign they hoisted that also, evidently wishing to be in the fashion set by the latest arrival from headquarters.\*

\* The *Almaz* remained at Odessa, and was afterwards used by the Bolsheviks as a torture-chamber and slaughter-house for their victims.

The position at Odessa was more critical than at Sevastopol. The whole of the town was in the hands of bluejackets and soldiers, who were terrorising the population and making large sums of money for themselves by cornering supplies. At night, burglaries by soldiers wearing masks were frequent, and civilians, even women, who ventured into the street after dark ran the risk of being stripped of their clothing, and especially of their boots. A wine store belonging to a Frenchman was raided, and two men who became too drunk to move were drowned in the wine. On the whole, it was well that rioters so soon became drunk, for they would have done much more damage if they had remained sober. The craving for alcohol, suppressed before the Revolution, was such that a tank containing spirit intended for the manufacture of asphyxiating gas was tapped and several men were poisoned to death.

The streets were thronged with soldiers who had either openly deserted from the trenches or obtained sick leave from the regimental doctors by threats. The troops at the front had refused to prepare winter quarters, on the plea that the war would not last over the winter. Some regiments were already fraternising daily with the enemy, and when a patriotic Russian battery opened fire on one of these the gunners were placed under arrest. Friction between the Russians and the Rumanians became so great that barbed wire was put up between them. Rumania was then at the nadir of her fortunes, and several British Red Cross doctors and sisters who had just

arrived in Odessa from that country gave us a terrible account of her condition.

Odessa contains a large Jewish population, and Mr. Balfour's pronouncement at this time that Palestine should be made a national home for the Jews evoked a remarkable pro-British demonstration. But the enthusiasm was short-lived. An enormous number of Russian currency notes printed in Germany were put into circulation, and their arrival was followed by an outburst of anti-British and pro-German propaganda. The news of the execution of Russian labour leaders at Riga gave some indication of what a German peace would mean, but the Russian demagogues were blind to such warnings. A separate peace seemed already inevitable, and many of the *intelligentsia* were disposed to say, with characteristic fatalism, Let the Germans come and restore order.

We left for Kieff on October 7. *Wagons-lits* were still running, and soldiers and peasants thronged the corridors; but it is a curious fact that at this stage of the Revolution they had sufficient respect for authority not to enter compartments for which they had no tickets. At Kieff, the capital of the Ukraine (which had not yet asserted her independence), we met several British artillery officers and sergeants who had been sent to train Russian soldiers in the use of the British 6-inch guns; but they complained that the Russian gunners took no interest whatever in their work. Indeed, our officers were wasting their time, for a few weeks afterwards the Bolsheviks placed a guard of Austrian prisoners over these guns.



RICHARD JAMES TIPTON

At Mohileff we gave the British Mission at General Headquarters such military information as we had brought from Turkey, and we dined in a mess that included generals from nine allied nations, all of whom the Russian government was obliged to warn a few weeks later that it could no longer be responsible for their safety.

We reached Petrograd on October 11, and Tipton and Bishop at once began to make arrangements for getting home via Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Their chief problem was clothes. Mufti was essential for officers passing through neutral countries, but the suits borrowed in the Crimea had to be returned from Petrograd to their owners. A month would not have sufficed to get clothes made, and the cost would have been fabulous. Happily the Naval Attaché at our Embassy and his assistant came to the rescue, and Tipton and Bishop left Petrograd on October 14 and reached England ten days later.

Less than six months afterwards, Tipton, who rejoined the Flying Corps, was shot in the abdomen while bringing down a German aeroplane. He took his own machine back to our lines, a distance of eight miles, and died two days later. Everybody loved him, but he would not have asked for any other end.

\* \* \* \* \*

Petrograd was fairly quiet, and Kerensky, who had installed himself in the emperor's former apartments at the Winter Palace, was to all



appearances supreme. But the Bolsheviks were gathering forces for their *coup d'état*. Lenin, whom Kerensky had weakly allowed to return to the capital, had taken possession of the palace of Madame Kchezinskaia, the emperor's former mistress, and was busily engaged in spreading the poison which was to bring Russia to ruin. Kornilov's attempt to seize the capital was used with ever-increasing success to embitter the people against Kerensky (who knew more about the attempt than he admitted), and against the Cadet Party and the *bourgeoisie* as a whole. All of these were branded as counter-Revolutionaries and Royalists, though none really desired to restore the old régime. Red and black processions paraded in the Nevsky—red with Bolshevik banners, and black with flags bearing such inscriptions as "Down with the Capitalist Ministers," "Down with the Imperialistic Allies," "Down with the *bourgeoisie*"; while every speech of Lenin appealed to the instinct for rapine latent in the semi-barbarians he was addressing. Kerensky and his Ministers affected to despise these demonstrations, and one of them, lunching with the British Ambassador, boasted that the one thing the Provisional Government desired was that the Bolsheviks should take up arms against it—a wish that was very soon to be gratified. The population, though not yet starving, was on a very small ration of bread (or, rather, of the black, soggy substance that passed for bread), and long queues lined up outside every food shop. Nevertheless, money in sufficient quantities could still buy anything, and the best restaurants were thronged. One by-product of

the Revolution was the refusal of waiters to accept tips, which were deemed contrary to the principles of democracy.

I returned forthwith to Sevastopol by the direct route through Moscow and Kharkoff, hoping to find that the plans for the expedition against Turkey were well advanced. But the naval staff was absorbed in political issues, and the *moral* of the fleet was such that operations were at present impossible. There was a chance that they might take place later, and quarters were allotted to me, first in the auxiliary cruiser *Dacia*, which had been a Rumanian liner, and then in the aviation cruiser *Imperatul Alexander*, renamed the *Republicanetz* after the Revolution.

The situation in the Black Sea had changed greatly for the worse since we left Odessa a fortnight earlier. The ships' committees, or soviets, mainly composed of bluejackets, were usurping more and more authority. A seaplane carrier which crossed to Sinope for a reconnaissance, as a preliminary to the proposed operations, lowered her planes into the water before the ship's crew noticed that bombs were attached to them. They at once held a meeting and insisted that no bombs should be dropped—only proclamations calling upon the Turks to throw off the German yoke. So, also, the committee of the flagship, on hearing of the stern punishment of a small mutiny in the German Navy, passed a resolution of sympathy with the mutineers. The *Centroflot*, or soviet for the whole fleet, requisitioned one of the principal hotels and established itself on shore for the purpose of controlling the town as well as the

ships. All sailings were suspended during the election for the Constituent Assembly.

The ships had now ceased to use the Russian ensign, and flew the Ukrainian flag and a red flag side by side. But the naval barracks on shore started a new fashion by flying a plain black flag, and when the *Centroflot* asked what this meant the reply was, "Death to everyone." Equally wild language was used at the countless meetings held on board every ship and in the town itself. A favourite resolution demanded "complete rupture with the middle classes, who are sucking the life-blood of the starving workmen and peasants."

The position of Russian officers at this time was pitiable, and few would have remained at their posts had not their country been still at war—or nominally at war. I was overwhelmed with inquiries about the prospect of their finding employment in the British service—no matter in what capacity. Hundreds of officers offered to accompany me to England as my orderly. In Russia their authority was at an end—except when the committees chose to make use of it. In all ships officers had been deprived of their swords and revolvers, and in some it was laid down that anyone wishing to go on shore must obtain permission from the soviet. Several crews demanded and obtained the use of the wardroom, and in the *Respublicanetz* the men refused to enter the cabins, and announced that officers must in future clean their own boots and make their own beds. But they made an exception in favour of the Englishman, and provided him with a servant!

This was not the only incident which showed that in Russia it was better to be a British than a Russian officer, however lonely one might feel through ignorance of the language.

The civilian middle classes were in almost as unhappy a plight as the officers. Though the time had not yet arrived when every *bourgeois* (a term sometimes defined as a man wearing a linen collar) went in hourly danger of imprisonment or death, yet already none dared lift his voice against the decrees of the soviets. These committees did not confine themselves to the work of the old government; their activities extended even to a man's domestic affairs. When a certain householder in Sevastopol dismissed a servant for refusing to carry out an order, the local soviet, usurping the functions of the law courts, sent two of its members to force their way into his house and insist on payment of compensation. The "frightened *intelligentsia*" were incapable of resistance; they seemed to despair of the future, to have lost all pride in their country, and to live only in the past.

The eleven *argadash* who had accompanied us from Turkey had been living comfortably on board a transport in the harbour as the guests of the Russian government, but now seven of them were sent at their own request to the Caucasus, whence their ancestors had migrated to Turkey after the Russian conquest of that province in the nineteenth century. In payment for the boat in which we had crossed the Black Sea the Russian Admiralty distributed 12,500 roubles between the eleven men—a high price for a dilapidated two-ton

felucca, but the equivalent of the four hundred pounds in gold which our friends had given for it. It was the intention of the Russian Staff to use this boat in the proposed operations, and three of the *arqadash*—two Circassians and the Armenian Keork—remained at Sevastopol for the same purpose. The dauntless Raghīb was given employment by the British Secret Service elsewhere.

In spite of all the signs and portents which have been mentioned, and of many other besides, Admiral Niemetz still expressed confidence that the situation would so far improve that the rescue of our men at Kastamuni might be undertaken. But suddenly, on November 7, the Bolshevik *coup d'état* in Petrograd, which overthrew Kerensky and put Lenin and Trotsky in power, shattered all idea of a serious offensive against Turkey.

The secret of Lenin's and Trotsky's success was obviously that they did not hesitate to use violence to enforce their policy, while Kerensky relied on speeches and proclamations. When he addressed the soviet of a town near Sevastopol it responded to his appeal for moderation by passing the wildest and most bloodthirsty resolutions, whereupon the colonel of a Cossack regiment which had come into the town to support him ordered the meeting to disperse. Yielding to an appeal from the president, Kerensky severely reprimanded the colonel, who immediately withdrew his men, remarking that Kerensky evidently did not need his assistance. It was perhaps owing to such episodes that even the Cossack regiments in Petrograd turned Bolshevik, while their comrades in the Caucasus, who had

seen less of Kerensky's methods, continued for a long time to oppose Lenin.

At Sevastopol the *Centroflot* passed a resolution condemning Kerensky and applauding the Bolshevik *coup*. No bloodshed followed immediately, because, although the new Revolution was detested by many, the opposition to it was unorganised, and the Commander-in-Chief, who was extremely unpopular with his officers, invariably adopted the line of least resistance to the soviets. But one or two incidents showed that a general upheaval could not be long postponed. While the *Dacia* was at sea, general quarters were sounded, and during the panic which ensued the commander struck a man. He was immediately placed under arrest by his crew. A few days later, while another cruiser was lying at Batum, the Captain of the Port, on coming on board, was knocked on the head by a bluejacket who had a grudge against him. He was seriously injured, but his assailant was not brought to trial.

## CHAPTER XI

### ANOTHER ATTEMPT

THE advent of the Bolsheviks to power heralded peace between Russia and Turkey, and if any help was to be given to the prisoners at Kastamuni it must be sent without further delay. Evidently the scheme for landing motors or horses would never be carried out, and the only plan now feasible was to pick up a few of our men at a rendezvous on the coast, to which they would have to make their way on foot. After much argument, the Commander-in-Chief agreed to provide a destroyer, and the *Centroflot* raised no objection.

The following arrangements were decided on. The destroyer was to land the three *argadash* at a deserted point on the Anatolian coast, near Sinope. They were, of course, "wanted" by the Turkish authorities, and could not show themselves in public, but they had a friend living near Sinope whom they would take with them to the outskirts of Kastamuni, and who would go boldly into the town while they lay in hiding. The rest of the scheme is set out in the following letter from myself, which the Sinope man was to hand to any British officer or soldier whom he saw in Kastamuni :

"Tipton, Bishop and I got through to Russia.

"This letter is brought by a man from the Black Sea coast; two Circassians and one Armenian wait outside the town. They are willing to guide not more than six of you to the coast. You will have to walk about 100 miles. A destroyer will be in waiting on December 7th and 8th, and again on December 12th and 13th. I have promised £200 for each officer that gets through. Bearer will let you know by letter (enclosed with this letter) how a reply is to be sent to him. The reply must either (1) state date and time you will meet him, or (2) state that you cannot come. If you decide to come, the men will wait for you, at the time you appoint, by the side of the Sinope Road, about an hour's walk from Kastamuni. Strike the road somewhere beyond the hospital and walk on until they stop you.

"You will move at night. Bearer will arrange shelter in huts used by cowherds in summer. He will be able to buy food en route.

"Wear fezes. Bearer has six for you, but may not be able to deliver them until you meet him on the road. Immaterial whether you wear uniform or mufti.

"If you can't come, send letter suggesting any other scheme. How many men guard you now? What troops and gendarmes are in Kastamuni or between Kastamuni and coast?"

On the morning of November 19 the destroyers *Gnyevny* and *Buistri*, both 1,050 tons, 33 knots, three 4-inch guns, left Sevastopol for the Turkish



coast. Besides the two Circassians and the Armenian Keork, we had on board three Greeks, who knew the coast and volunteered to row the party to the shore in the felucca, carried on deck for this purpose. Each of the three *argadash* took a Russian rifle, a Caucasian knife, a bomb, a water-proof, a water-bottle, a bag for bread, and between them they had six fezes, a bottle of rum, and thirteen pounds of bacon, which seemed to be the most sustaining food, in proportion to its weight, that they could carry for the use of our officers. To Keork was entrusted £T.100 in paper money. It was settled that on their return to the rendezvous a fortnight later they were to light three fires in a row when they saw the destroyer, to indicate their exact position on the beach. If the destroyer was unable to send a boat at once, on account of bad weather, she would acknowledge the signal in a certain manner and send the boat as soon as possible. The operation of embarking the three men and the British officers was to be covered by the destroyer's gunfire if necessary.

At 1 a.m. on November 20 we sighted Indje Burun, the northernmost point of Anatolia, and lowered the felucca into the water. The Greeks duly landed the plucky trio, and reported on their return that they had seen a Turkish patrol and had only just avoided detection. We hoisted the boat on board again and went back to Sevastopol.

Having nothing to do during the fortnight of waiting, I obtained leave to visit the Caucasus, and took passage to Batum in the *Principesa Maria*, a Russian auxiliary cruiser. The weather was rough, and on the fourth day the ship found her-

self near Sukhum, seventy miles out of her course. We narrowly escaped meeting a German submarine which had just sunk a Russian transport off Sukhum, and two destroyers which had come out to look for her escorted us into Batum. We then learned that U-boat 42 had landed six men near Poti, and that five of them—two German sailors and three Georgian officers of the Russian Army—had been captured. Their plan was to spread German propaganda in the Caucasus, and they carried with them two million roubles of paper money, most of which was unluckily in the possession of the sixth man, also a Georgian, who escaped. The submarine had travelled from Kiel to Constantinople, via Gibraltar, in seven weeks.

From Batum I went by train to Tiflis. During the night a Russian officer in the lower berth of my *coupé* was robbed of the whole of his kit, including his boots—a terrible calamity in Russia at the end of 1917; while I was lucky enough to sleep unscathed above him. He sought to hold me responsible for his loss because I had turned out the light, the switch being on a level with my berth; but I ventured to point out that the door-bolt, which could not have been pushed home, was on a level with his.

At Tiflis a British military mission under General Offley-Shore was attached to the Russian Caucasus Army, and at that time there was a hope that, even if the Bolshevists made peace, Armenians, Georgians, and Circassians might unite, with our assistance, to carry on the war against the Turks. Armenian troops were, indeed already drilling—the first and last time during my

three months in Russia that I saw any soldiers at work.

On leaving Tiflis I obtained a seat on a Russian motor-lorry crossing the Caucasus by the famous Georgian military road, 133 miles in length, which itself ascends to a height of 7,700 feet and passes Mount Kasbek, towering another 10,000 feet above it. The road had not been swept, as it is in normal times, and near the summit we looked like being snowed up, but eventually we got through and reached Vladikavkaz, on the north side of the Caucasus, after a sixteen-hour drive. In Vladikavkaz Bolshevism was then at a heavy discount, the town being dominated by General Porloftzoff and his corps of Don-Kuban Cossacks. The General had been Military Governor of Petrograd a few weeks earlier, and told me that he had placed in the hands of Kerensky, then Minister-President, documentary proof that Trotsky was in German pay, but Kerensky would take no action.

In the General's ante-room I met Captain E. W. C. Noel, of the Indian Political Service, who was on his way from Moscow to Mesopotamia, via the Caspian, a journey which led a few weeks later to his capture by the Jangali tribe in North-West Persia, who kept him a prisoner for six months under conditions not less horrible than those our men had known in Turkey.

From Vladikavkaz it took two days to get by train to Novorossisk, where a Russian vessel was due to call to take me back to Sevastopol. But the naval staff at Novorossisk had no news of her, and I had to make my way round to Sevastopol by rail, via Rostov—a cross-country journey which

occupied three days and nights. I could speak no Russian, and met nobody who spoke English or French except one man who accosted me in broad Cockney. He turned out to be a Russian Jew who had lived for many years in Whitechapel. Under one of the Military Service Acts he had been given the option of joining the British or the Russian Army, and he had cunningly chosen to come to Russia, knowing that as the Russian Army already numbered far more men than could be equipped he was not likely to be called up.

On arrival at Sevastopol I went with Commander Le Page to remind Admiral Niemetz about sending a destroyer to the rendezvous on the appointed dates. But during my absence events had followed one another with unexpected rapidity. The *Centroflot* had resolved that all operations and sailings must be sanctioned by itself, though the Commander-in-Chief remained responsible for the execution of orders, obviously because only officers understood navigation. A bluejacket named Romanetz had been appointed Commissary, or executive officer of the Committee, and no order issued by the Commander-in-Chief was to be valid without his counter-signature. The Admiral therefore expressed his regret that he was powerless to give any directions for a destroyer to sail, and he referred us to the *Centroflot*.

Going on to the *Centroflot*, we found an assembly of about fifty bluejackets, presided over by Romanetz, with two or three senior officers in attendance. None of the numerous speakers seemed able to confine himself to the matter

under discussion. Everybody's remarks were interlarded with denunciations—applauded to the echo—of landowners, manufacturers, bankers, and the *bourgeois* generally. It was impossible to believe that such a hot-headed body of men could administer or control anything without disastrous results. When at last we were given a hearing, we used every argument that we could muster to persuade the members to send a vessel. Both honour and humanity, we urged, demanded that neither the three *arqadash* nor any British officers who might have come back with them to the coast should be stranded at the rendezvous, where they might die of hunger or exposure. A speech in the same sense was made by the Admiral, who addressed the assembled bluejackets as *Tovarishz* (Comrades). Several of them favoured our application, but the meeting was turned by Romanetz, who argued that as negotiations for an armistice had already been opened with Turkey no man-of-war could be sent to her coast. After a lengthy debate, the only concession we could obtain was that a wire should be sent to G.H.Q. at Mohileff to ask for a ruling.

The days passed and no reply arrived, and it seemed doubtful whether the message had ever been sent. Then news came that an armistice had been signed by the Bolshevists, and as one of its clauses forbade Russian vessels to go south of a line drawn from the Danube to a point near Trebizond, all hope of a destroyer keeping the appointment at the rendezvous had to be abandoned.

Commander Le Page had meanwhile been called

to Odessa, and I telegraphed to ask him whether he could find an Italian or Rumanian vessel to undertake the trip. He made every possible effort, but no ship could be persuaded to sail. The French yacht at Sevastopol, formerly *stationnaire* at Constantinople, volunteered to go if she could raise steam, but this also was found impossible on account of the condition of her boilers.

As a last hope a small sailing-boat was chartered, and several Russian naval officers generously offered to man her, though in doing so they would have risked punishment by the Bolsheviks, besides endangering their lives. Provisions and water were put on board, and we were on the point of starting when a severe storm broke. For over a week the wind remained so high as to put the voyage out of the question for such a craft, and by the time it had subsided it was too late to reach the rendezvous in time. The scheme had to be abandoned. In any case a sailing-boat would perhaps have done more harm than good. The party at the rendezvous would be expecting a destroyer, and we should have to fly the British or Russian flag to show them who we were. As our boat had no gun, the flag would draw to the beach all the soldiers and gendarmes who saw it, and the party at the rendezvous would almost certainly be discovered and recaptured.

Nothing more could be done, and I left for Petrograd on December 16, only just before the long-threatened pogrom took place in the Black Sea Fleet, when sixty officers were murdered at Sevastopol alone.

In Petrograd, all passports for Englishmen were held up by the Russian Foreign Office, in consequence of the arrest of Litvinoff and other Bolshevik missionaries in England. I managed, however, by repeated attendance at the Winter Palace, where the Bolshevik government had installed itself, to secure an interview with Trotsky. He is unmistakably a Jew (his real name is Bronstein), and it was perhaps not surprising that he had also a ferrety look, as of one who is on the watch for a bomb. Having been interned in Canada as an enemy agent, he had no reason to love an Englishman, but he asked me quite civilly if I could give him any reason for making an exception in my favour. I said that after escaping from an enemy country it was hard to be imprisoned in an allied country (the Bolsheviks had not yet definitely denounced the alliance). He laughed, shook my hand, and immediately gave an order for my passport to be endorsed. To impress upon me, perhaps, what a great concession this was, the Red Guards plundered my luggage at the railway station and removed a Caucasian knife given to me by Raghib. Another memento of our journey from Turkey, the rifle taken from the Turkish soldier who appeared as we were embarking, was left in the British Embassy and fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks when the building was looted a few months later.

The journey home took three weeks. My route lay first through Finland to Haparanda, near the Arctic Circle, and thence by Stockholm and Christiania to Bergen. We crossed the North

Sea in a Newcastle packet, but as no escort was available and the last convoy had been sunk we slipped across during the first night to the Shetlands, lay up all day in Lerwick harbour, and dashed down next night to Aberdeen. Other Englishmen were allowed to leave Russia a week later.

I did not hear until I arrived in England that the camp at Kastamuni had been broken up before my letter could have been delivered, and all the prisoners had been moved to Changri, sixty miles further inland, whence the majority of them were afterwards sent to the still more inaccessible town of Yozgad. The department of the War Office which knew of the removal did not know that I was endeavouring to assist prisoners to escape from Kastamuni, and the department which knew what I was doing did not know of the removal!

No news of the Armenian and the two Circassians whom I had been obliged to abandon was received until long after the Turco-British armistice was signed. What happened to them was characteristic of the Ottoman Empire. Soon after they landed, the Circassians quarrelled with Keork, murdered him, and stole the £T.100 which he carried. The body was discovered and identified by gendarmes, and the arrest of the two men followed. They bought their lives by revealing the plan for helping our officers, but both of them were imprisoned. One died in gaol, the other escaped.

Thus the plan for helping our men at Kastamuni to get to Russia was wrecked three times over.



But it is pleasant to record that in the following year, 1918, no less than twenty-five British officers and one soldier (all, with one exception, men who had been at Kastamuni) broke out of the camp at Yozgad and enjoyed varying periods of liberty, eight of them eventually reaching Cyprus.

## CHAPTER XII

### LONDON AND EGYPT

SOON after reaching England I had the honour of being received by the King, who questioned me about the Kut prisoners. When I replied that according to information which had filtered through to Kastamuni a very large proportion of them were dead, His Majesty asked for details, and hoped that those who survived realised they had not been forgotten. This seemed a good opportunity to voice a grievance on their behalf, and I ventured to say that they did think they had been forgotten, because, although nearly two years had passed since Kut had, through no fault of the garrison, been captured, no decorations for its defence had been given, except a few which General Townshend had awarded on his own authority in the field. The King immediately instructed me to report the matter to the Military Secretary at the War Office and at the India Office. Further communications passed between those departments and Buckingham Palace, and in due course a list of honours was approved by His Majesty. The long delay, during which probably more than half of the rank and file who had been recommended perished in captivity, was due to a regulation that a prisoner of war cannot be decorated until—after his release—he has been

exonerated from blame for capture. As General Townshend and the entire garrison surrendered under orders from the army commander there was no rhyme or reason for applying this rule to them, but the King's intervention was necessary before the absurdity was recognised.

Indeed, a sense of the ridiculous does not often defeat official routine. While I was in England I received a letter from the War Office calling upon me to forward "a statement in duplicate setting out the incidents which led to capture by the enemy." My reply referred the War Office to the army commander who ordered the surrender of Kut. After a year's suspense I learned that "the Secretary of the War Office presents his compliments to Lieutenant-Colonel Keeling, and begs to state that he is commanded by the Army Council to inform him that, his statement regarding the circumstances of his capture having been investigated, the Council considers that no blame attaches to him in the matter."

His Majesty received officers who had escaped a good deal more warmly than did some War Office generals, who wanted to get on with the war and considered us rather a nuisance. We probably were, and no doubt we exaggerated the value of the fragmentary information we were able to supply about the condition of enemy countries. But we did think that more attention might have been given to our suggestions for securing better treatment for those we had left behind in captivity. In spite of the splendid work of the Red Cross on behalf of prisoners, I was convinced that our government could achieve a good deal more by

diplomatic action, and their apathy or lack of success induced me to get together an unofficial committee, called the Prisoners in Turkey Committee, which brought pressure to bear on the departments concerned, both directly and by parliamentary and Press propaganda.

The care of British prisoners in enemy countries would have been immensely simplified if it had been entrusted to a single department, instead of being divided between several, to say nothing of various semi-official and unofficial committees. The root of the trouble was that Lord Newton's Prisoners of War Department (so-called) had no real authority and was hampered at every turn by the War Office, who, just because prisoners were of no use in the struggle for victory, cared as little for them "as butchers for meatless days." If the Committee of Imperial Defence are preparing a handbook for the conduct of the next war, I venture to suggest that they should provide for the establishment of one central body, with full powers, to look after prisoners.

The League of Nations, too, if it can bring itself to recognise that there will be more wars, might with advantage take in hand the revision of the Hague rules concerning the treatment of prisoners. True, many of them were broken, but many were observed, and many should be altered. For example, the rule that a prisoner shall have the same food, lodging, and clothing as the troops of his captor, and shall be subject to the same discipline, requires amendment; for food on which an Asiatic can subsist may kill a European, and it is not right that a prisoner of war in Turkish hands

should be liable to methods of punishment which we, rightly or wrongly, consider barbarous. Might not the League also frame rules for the exchange of prisoners and for their internment in a neutral country; for regulating the rate of exchange at which prisoners are to be paid;\* and for visits to prisoners' camps by neutral inspectors?

Mistakes made by our government in dealing with enemy prisoners often reacted severely upon our men in Turkey. In February, 1918, a hundred invalid British prisoners arrived in England from Turkey. We owed a hundred Turkish prisoners in exchange, but we took five months to get them away, and thus gave the Turks an excuse for indulging at other times their native fondness for procrastination. Again, the authorities in India refused to allow Turkish officer prisoners to buy army bread at the government rate. This did not make much difference to them, because good bread could be bought in the bazaar at about the same price, but the Turks as a reprisal put an end to a similar privilege enjoyed by British officers, who henceforth had to buy very inferior bread in the open market at prices ranging from half a crown to four shillings a pound. The facts were at once brought to the notice of our government, but it was some months before the government of India would give way. Another lamentable mistake was to stop the payment by the Dutch Minister in Constantinople of a monthly cash allowance to prisoners in camps east of the Taurus, on the ground that nothing could be bought with it. At no time during the war would money in Turkey

\* See page 51, footnote.

fail to buy food. Lastly, great lack of imagination was shown during the Berne negotiations for exchange of prisoners, when our delegates stipulated for the repatriation of all British medical officers, except one for every thousand prisoners. As most camps contained far fewer than a thousand men, the effect would have been to deprive a number of the camps of their British doctors, with disastrous results. Fortunately the armistice was signed before the repatriation could be carried out.

Every prisoner who escaped was served by the War Office, on arrival in England, with a notice forbidding him to make any statement in public or to the Press about the treatment of British prisoners of war. This nipped in the bud the activities of a well-known officer who, having escaped from Germany, appeared on platforms in industrial centres where strikes were threatened, and described the enemy's ill-treatment of prisoners. He claimed to have stopped at least one strike by his speeches, and was furious at having to keep his mouth shut.

I was under orders to return to my regimental dépôt in India, but as I did not know how long I should be kept there I secured a transfer to a Territorial unit. This appointment, however, had only just been gazetted when it was cancelled, and I was put on special duty at the War Office. The General Staff had realised, some little time earlier, that to encourage escapes from enemy prison camps had a direct bearing upon man-power, not because the escapers were again available for duty (their number would never be

large enough to make much difference), but because the greater the number of escapes the more troops would the enemy use up in guarding the camps.\* A special branch was therefore formed to assist officers in escaping, and I was asked to take charge of a Turkish and Bulgarian section of it. All letters from British prisoners in those countries were opened, and useful information was obtained about conditions in the camps and the possibilities of escape.

I found that several schemes for aiding escapes from Turkey had already been considered. One plan submitted to the War Office in great detail by code messages from Changri provided for a rescue by aeroplanes, but the Royal Air Force had no surplus machines to risk on such an extremely hazardous venture. My instructions were on other lines. I was ordered to go out to Mudros, but just as I was starting it was decided that the work could be done better in London. I shall not describe the methods employed, because they may be useful in another war. Suffice it to say that several rendezvous were arranged on the Turkish and Bulgarian coasts, where escapers from certain camps would be picked up. Help in reaching these points was sent to selected prisoners, including Sweet, but the distances and difficulties were very great, and none of those who started for the rendezvous got through; the eight officers who reached Cyprus from Yozgad were not aware of any rendezvous and achieved freedom by their own unaided efforts. However, in August a launch which was patrolling near one of the rendezvous

\* Compare page 73.

did rescue one Indian prisoner, a sepoy named Shir Husain, of the 24th Punjabis. This man had been working with other Indians on the coast road, under a Turkish escort, when he saw the launch, guessed she was British, and started to swim out to her. Fire was opened on him and upon the launch, but the plucky dash for freedom was successful, and the man was taken to Egypt.

Escapes from Turkey and Bulgaria during the winter were out of the question owing to the severity of the climate, and when I had completed the schemes for summer escapes I was posted to Mesopotamia on ordinary duty. I left England in August, 1918.

In Egypt, on my way east, I visited several prisoners' camps, including one on the outskirts of Alexandria which contained 1,400 Turkish and a few German officers, and about 700 soldier servants. No representative of a neutral nation had been appointed to guard the welfare of the Turkish prisoners, because Turkey still considered Egypt part of her dominions and therefore could not with dignity ask any other Power to protect her interests. But, indeed, no protection was necessary. The officers were housed free of charge in excellent huts, properly furnished, lighted, and heated, and they were well fed by a contractor for ten Egyptian piastres (2s. 1d.) per day. Each officer received a like sum or more as pocket money. There was little need of parcels, and few arrived. Letters were received and despatched regularly, and I suggested to the Inspector of Prisoners' Camps that the privilege given to us in Turkey of writing extra letters at Christmas



might perhaps be reciprocated on the occasion of some Muhammadan festival. The only complaint which the officers made was that they were not allowed to go for walks outside the compound more than once a week, and even then might not enter the town or speak to an inhabitant. Some of them were rather sore about this rule, and compared it with the freedom I had enjoyed at Kastamuni. It seems probable that the restrictions on exercise and bazaar visits which were from time to time imposed in Turkey were a reprisal for the restrictions enforced in Egypt. I pointed this out to the general commanding, but he said that the danger of allowing Turkish prisoners to talk to Egyptians was an insuperable objection to visits to the town. In spite, therefore, of the excellent arrangements in the camp, which were such a contrast to the conditions in Turkey, I decided that I would rather be a prisoner in Turkey (as an officer, not as a private soldier) than in Egypt. The rows of stereotyped huts, and the barbed wire and electric lights surrounding them, must have been a constant reminder that one was a prisoner, and sentries on platforms at each corner of the enclosure rubbed the fact well in. All these arrangements were necessary and proper, but they made a striking contrast to the happy-go-lucky methods of our custodians in Asia Minor, whom we thought of less as gaolers than as people who had strayed into our lives from a comic opera.

I visited two camps near the Nile, containing about 14,000 Turkish rank and file, and another camp east of the Suez Canal. The treatment of the men, as of the officers, seemed excellent. All

prisoners were housed and fed free (the daily rations weighed over three pounds), and all men who worked received pay. Men who were fit to take exercise could get all they wanted in the very large compound.

One camp contained a number of invalid Turks who had been sent from India for repatriation under the Berne agreement. All were Anatolian Moslems, for the Ottoman government insisted (as they had done after the fall of Kut\*) that none of the prisoners to be returned to them should be Arabs or Christians. I saw several blind or maimed Arabs who had no hope of being repatriated till the end of the war. Compare this merciless attitude of the Turkish government to a subject race with the stipulation made by the British delegates at Berne that seven hundred of the first thousand of our men to be exchanged should be Indians. It is surprising that these facts were never brought to the attention of the people of India by our government, so far as I know.

While waiting for a steamer to Mesopotamia, I visited the Palestine front, where Lord Allenby's great push was then in preparation. On the day I was at General Headquarters a newly taken Turkish prisoner whom I seemed to know by sight arrived for examination. He turned out to be a Kastamuni shopkeeper, who had been called up soon after we came away, and he told me he was delighted to end his fighting days by being "safely captured."

\* See page 4.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOW BRITISH PRISONERS LEFT TURKEY

THE armistice with Turkey, signed at Mudros on October 30, 1918, stipulated for the immediate collection in Constantinople of all prisoners of allied nationality. Whoever inserted this condition on behalf of the allies must have been remarkably ignorant either of the location of the prisoners or of the state of communications in Turkey after four years of war. For the officers and men interned near the Bosphorus, or in Western Anatolia, Constantinople was probably a suitable embarkation-point. But the bulk of the rank and file were working far away in the Taurus and Amanus Mountains, or on the section of the Baghdad railway east of the Euphrates; and although through communication by rail from these camps existed, the rolling-stock was so defective, and so little fuel was available, that to convey everybody to Constantinople would have taken months. If the task had been attempted, our men would have suffered severely on the way from Turkish neglect and incompetence, of which they had already such bitter experience.

Fortunately, the opposing generals in Mesopotamia and Syria did not think it necessary to adhere strictly to the Mudros Treaty. I was at Baghdad when news arrived that an armistice had

been signed, and I received orders to visit the camps in Upper Mesopotamia, and to arrange for the evacuation of our men by whatever route seemed best. My small party left Baghdad for Mosul, a journey of 250 miles up the right bank of the Tigris, on the evening of November 1.

The British rail-head was at Tikrit, and thence we had a further two days' journey by motor along the same desert track which I had trodden as a prisoner two and a half years earlier. The topographical information then gained, which was handed to the War Office when I reached England, had been of some little use in the operations leading to General Marshall's great victory a few days before. Our course was strewn for many miles with corpses of men and animals, abandoned carts, pontoons, harness, ammunition, and half-burned papers; but the enemy's hasty retirement had thrown him all the quicker into the arms of the cavalry and armoured cars that cut off his retreat. In Turkey, three months later, I ran across one of the few transport drivers who had escaped, and he had led such a hard life since that he bitterly regretted he had not stayed behind to be captured—a tribute to our reputation for humane treatment of prisoners. Certainly the 13,000 Turkish prisoners whom I met on this journey seemed well cared for when I remembered the plight in which a similar number of our own men had passed along the same road in the opposite direction after the fall of Kut.

At the moment when the armistice was signed, the situation in Mesopotamia was peculiar. The crushing defeat inflicted on the enemy bore some

resemblance, though on a smaller scale, to General Allenby's great sweep in Syria. But whereas Aleppo was captured before the cessation of hostilities, the armistice found General Marshall's army, or rather General Fanshawe's column, "in the air" a few miles south of Mosul. Prisoners continued to come in even after the "Hostilities will cease" telegram had been received from General Headquarters, and some offers of surrender had to be declined. When, however, our cavalry reached Mosul, the Commander-in-Chief, Ali Ihsan Pasha, refused to evacuate the place, and the remnants of his army continued to occupy it, while our own troops bivouacked on the river bank below the town. The transport carts of the two forces mingled with one another outside the grain stores, and the enemy's band, which had been heard practising "the God Save" soon after our arrival, came to play outside the French Consulate, which General Fanshawe had occupied. A still more remarkable incident was the guarding of the approaches from Kurdistan by a Turkish detachment under a British officer. This anomalous state of affairs continued for about a week, when General Marshall arrived from Baghdad and insisted that Ali Ihsan should clear out.

The place was much changed since I saw it, as a prisoner, in 1916. Nearly all Turkish towns are filthy: Mosul at the end of four years' war was all filth. After rain the streets must have been a quagmire, but in dry weather the place was still more unpleasant, and so completely did the dust envelop it that when viewed from Nineveh, on the opposite bank of the Tigris, its

minarets, dimly perceptible, looked like the mill chimneys of a Lancashire town. The inhabitants had suffered severely from famine during the war, and one witness reported that they had even been driven to eat one another's children. I visited the prison in which we had been interned, and our still legible inscriptions upon the walls seemed very morbid to a free man.

Ali Ihsan reported that about 300 British and 1,200 Indian prisoners, with three doctors of the Indian Medical Service, had been collected at Nisibin, 120 miles north-west of Mosul, and that the only other allied prisoners in Mesopotamia were a small number of sick men in hospitals between these two places. A few British soldiers who had been working as servants to German officers in Mosul were said to have gone north with their masters, who were making for the Black Sea across the mountains. It was afterwards discovered that on the fall of Damascus the Turks had intended to transfer all their prisoners from Mesopotamia, and several hundred men were actually taken to the Amanus; but Allenby's occupation of Muslimieh junction (north of Aleppo) cut communication by rail and made further removals impossible.

General Marshall addressed a stern reply to Ali Ihsan Pasha, reminding him of the disgraceful neglect of British prisoners during the war; warning him that the treatment to be accorded to every Turkish commander in our hands depended on the efforts made to repatriate them; and announcing that an officer would proceed to Nisibin to superintend their evacuation. Before

leaving Mosul on this mission I called on the Pasha to obtain a *vesika* for my journey through Turkish territory. He was full of excuses for the enormous mortality among our men. He disclaimed all personal responsibility, and no doubt with reason, for he was not in charge of them during 1916-17. But he rashly went on to say that the deaths among the Kut men were mainly due to scurvy contracted during the siege—a statement which even the Turkish death-certificates prove to be false—and he wound up rather inconsequently by remarking that humanity forbids the ill-treatment of prisoners. Turkish officers who begin to talk of humanity sometimes get out of their depth, their knowledge of the subject being usually derived from textbooks or newspapers; but this particular Pasha was specially qualified to speak, for he had organised the massacre of Armenians at Van.

Our departure from Mosul was delayed for lack of petrol, which had to come all the way from Tikrit by road. Meanwhile a visit was made to the cemetery opened in 1916 for British prisoners—a bare piece of ground south of the town, without wall or fence. A list obtained from the Turkish medical authorities showed that of 300 prisoners admitted to the hospital in 1916, 120 had died in it. Only two graves—those of officers—were marked by stones. The others—about 130 in all—were jumbled together with no marks or numbers to distinguish them.

We left Mosul on November 8 in two Ford cars—one of them carrying a reserve of petrol. Few other types of car could have made headway, for the unmetalled track had been ploughed into deep

furrows by the heavy steel-tyred German motor-lorries, some of which were derelict by the roadside. We overtook large parties of Turkish soldiers en route from Mosul, with many hundreds of baggage-carts and mules and a few guns and machine-guns ; but the country itself, though exceedingly fertile even without irrigation, is inhabited only by a few nomads, and as we could not find a village we were obliged to bivouac for a rainy night. At Tel Uqnah, next day, we came to a German dépôt and hospital on the line of the Baghdad railway. The attempt to continue the standard gauge from the rail-head at Nisibin to Mosul had been abandoned early in 1918, and work had been started on a light two-foot-six-inch track ; but only a small part of the earthwork had been completed, and operations had been suspended on the fall of Damascus a few weeks before, when the German engineers, fearing that their retreat via Aleppo would be cut off, had hurriedly fled. Several other dépôts were passed on the way to Nisibin, all very German but destitute of Germans.

At Demir Qapu we found a Sikh dafadar of the 7th Lancers in hospital. Naturally he was glad to see us, but he had forgotten how to speak Hindustani, and was much more fluent in the Turkish he had acquired during his two and a half years of captivity. From him we learned that ten days previously 200 British, 800 Indian, and 200 Russian prisoners at Nisibin had received sudden orders to march to Jazirah (on the Tigris above Mosul) to make a road for facilitating a Turkish retreat from Mesopotamia. No transport of any kind was provided for their blankets or kit, and they had



suffered severely from cold. When they reached Demir Qapu news of the armistice arrived, and everybody was sent back to Nisibin.

Promising to send a car back for the dafadar, we pushed on and reached Nisibin the same evening. Nearly all the 300 British and 1,300 Indians in camp were on the road to greet us, and for hours they filled the air with cheers and singing. While most of the Indians were from Kut (for the Turks had captured very few Indian troops anywhere else), almost two-thirds of the British prisoners had been taken in other fields—in the Dardanelles, at Katia, at Gaza, in the attempt to relieve Kut, and at Hamadan in Persia. One man in the Cameron Highlanders had been brought all the way from Macedonia. The "father" of the army prisoners was a private of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers captured at Seddul-Bahr over three and a half years before, but there were several submarine men who had been taken even earlier. Most of the British prisoners had worked at camps in Asia Minor, or in the Taurus and Amanus railway tunnels, before being sent to the Nisibin area.

The men looked better than one had dared to hope, and their spirit was unbroken by their sufferings. It was the survival of the fittest. All but the most stalwart and sound were dead. Turkish official excuses, and many Turkish officers with whom I spoke, echoed Ali Ihsan in ascribing the frightful mortality among the Kut men to the privations of the siege. But the British I.M.S. doctor at Nisibin, who was himself taken at Kut, emphatically denied that more than a small proportion of the deaths were attributable, either

directly or indirectly, to this cause. To obtain evidence which would help to decide the question I recorded and sent on to the War Office the statements of many of the prisoners.

The men's terrible journey from Kut has been described in Chapter II. The mortality in the working camps was at first even higher than it had been on the march, and men captured on other fronts suffered, of course, equally with the garrison of Kut. Nearly all the Hindus were kept in Upper Mesopotamia for the extension of the railway from Ras al Ain to Mosul, but most of the British and Muhammadan prisoners went to work in the tunnels through the Amanus and Taurus, or to make roads in Asia Minor. Whatever their location, the treatment of our men during 1916-17 was shockingly inhuman. Herded at night in verminous barracks or dilapidated tents, or under the open sky, with inadequate clothing and wretched food, they were driven like slaves by day, toiling, whatever the heat, week after week, without even the one day's rest which Islam as well as Christianity ordains. Men whose labour did not satisfy their taskmasters were bastinadoed or flogged with cowhide whips. At one camp there were no blankets, the shirts supplied consisted of two handkerchiefs sewn together, and the men went barefooted or with feet wrapped in sacking. Money or clothing was extorted by the guards as the price of freedom from persecution, and at one camp a bribe had even to be paid for permission to visit the latrines.

The sick received no drugs—there were none to give; treatment consisted in withholding the day's

ration. To very many, stricken by dysentery, enteritis, scurvy, pneumonia, malaria, cholera, beri-beri, or typhus, death came as a happy release; and there were some, not so ill, who went out to meet it before it came. A doctor of the Indian Medical Service, who was kept in the Ras al Ain-Mosul area throughout his captivity, informed me that in a camp containing 1,200 of our men, 500 died in the months of February, March, and April, 1917, and 250 more were sent up to Asia Minor as cripples. Those who died in hospital were buried by the other patients.

Some of the Turkish doctors were worse than useless, and for many months no attempt was made to distribute the British doctors among the camps. Ten of them were kept four months at Ras al Ain itself, with little or nothing to do, although they begged to be sent to places where our men had no medical aid and were dying by the hundred. Even when this callous stupidity ceased and a better allotment was arranged, no attention was paid to our doctors' protests against the neglect and ill-treatment to which so many deaths were due. Several of them were punished by solitary confinement for their efforts on the men's behalf, and one who wrote to the American Consul at Aleppo asking for food to keep them alive was immediately removed to another camp. Worst of all, our doctors were dreadfully handicapped by lack of drugs and instruments, and gruesome tales were told of operations by safety-razor blades without anæsthetics, until the belated arrival of supplies sent by Mrs. Bromley Davenport's Fund, which saved many lives.

Perhaps it may be suggested that prisoners' stories distort the facts or magnify isolated cases into common practices. But their accounts are confirmed not only by the British doctors who were present in the camps, but by American missionaries, officials of the railway, and other independent witnesses, to say nothing of the damning evidence furnished by the mortality returns.\* Was any other treatment to be expected from the Turk? He has not made much progress since he left the uplands of Central Asia. In the sixteenth century many Europeans fell into his hands and became galley slaves. Their sufferings inspired the prayer in the Church of England litany "for prisoners and captives," and Luther wrote a special pamphlet for their guidance. Contemporary reports of their experiences read very like the statements of our men.†

Conditions improved very considerably after the winter of 1916-17: the enormous death-rate probably alarmed even the Turkish War Office, and perhaps they were beginning to foresee the day of reckoning. Most of the men were handed over to the company constructing the Baghdad railway, and though some of its German officials were not to be outdone in brutality by any Turk, yet there were numerous exceptions. Certainly food, clothing, quarters, medical and sanitary arrangements improved at all camps which came

\* According to an official statement in the House of Commons on March 8, 1920, 42 per cent. of the rank and file, British and Indian, taken prisoner by the Turks (excluding those who were immediately exchanged), perished in captivity. The death-rate among the Kut prisoners was, as already mentioned, even higher.

† See "The Day of the Crescent," by G. E. Hubbard.

under German management. Many of our men were placed in responsible positions on the railway, and reaped the reward of the confidence which their honesty and capacity inspired. Some of them, however, did not neglect opportunities of striking a blow at the enemy. A party of Indian prisoners to whom the Turks were rash enough to entrust the unloading of aeroplane parts, saw to it that they became unserviceable.

Throughout the war large quantities of food and clothing, and considerable sums of money, were sent to the camps by the Red Cross in England or by the American and Dutch legations and consulates in Turkey, and through their exertions many lives were saved. A large proportion of these supplies, however, did not reach our men, owing to chronic transport difficulties. During the first seven months of 1918 the passage of parcels through Austria (the only available route) was suspended by the government of that country, and only 10 lbs. of food reached each prisoner in Turkey: during the same period about 600 lbs. of food reached each prisoner in Germany. Another cause of the non-arrival of remittances and goods was the corruption of the Turkish officials through whose hands they passed. The contents of many parcels were sold to local shopkeepers or even to the prisoners themselves. One commandant who forged receipts for money and parcels on a large scale was eventually brought to trial and sentenced to degradation and three years' imprisonment, but many other guilty persons escaped scot-free.

The only officers among the prisoners at Nisibin were three doctors of the Indian Medical Service,

all from Kut, and I spent the night with one of them who had taken possession of a German engineer's house on a hill three miles from the camp. He had received no war news except from German sources, and had seen no English book or newspaper since he was captured, and he had never even heard the word "camouflage"—possibly no matter for commiseration.

The prisoners were not yet out of the wood, and their removal from Nisibin was urgently necessary. Most of them were living in tattered tents which would give little protection against the winter rains and cold, and the men who had been sent a few days earlier on the futile journey to Demir Qapu had sold all the spare clothes and blankets which they could not carry on their backs; if the armistice had come a month or two later many of them would have been dead. Repatriation by way of Mosul was impossible, because the British transport available was barely sufficient to feed the troops at that place, and no Turkish carts could be obtained. The other route was by rail to Aleppo, but the departure of the Germans had utterly disorganised the railway, and the silence of the British authorities at Aleppo seemed to confirm a rumour that most of the line west of the Euphrates had been destroyed. After discussion with the railway officials, most of whom, being Greeks, were keen to do their best for our men, I decided that a train containing a first party of 1,000 Indians should endeavour to reach Jerablus, on the Euphrates, where the men could be accommodated in barracks. One of the motor-cars, to be carried on the train, would then take me to

Aleppo to arrange for the line to be repaired or for road transport to fetch the men from Jerablus, while the train returned to Nisibin for the others.

The telegraph from Nisibin to Aleppo had, of course, been cut, but the Turkish line to Mosul was intact, and communication was established with the British operators at that place by a signaller who was found among the prisoners and whose hand had not lost its cunning. In this way a message was got through to Baghdad, and thence by wireless to Palestine, to warn Lord Allenby that the men at Nisibin were being sent to Aleppo.

Next morning, while preparations for the move were being made, Ali Ihsan Pasha arrived by motor-car from Mosul, escorted by two British armoured cars. They had been sent at his own request, but whether he feared an attack from the Arabs or thought that they lent dignity to his retirement can only be conjectured. The road was certainly not safe for any Turkish officer travelling without a guard of some sort, and a few days earlier Beduin had killed a German who was motoring along it. The armoured cars returned to Mosul next day with three of our men, the first to be repatriated.

A single Algerian prisoner was the only representative of England's allies at Nisibin, but my instructions were to remove Russians also, of whom there were several hundred. They had all been captured in days when Russia was our firm ally, and now, with chaos in their own country and no legation in Constantinople to take any interest in them, they were far more to be

pitied than our own men. Most were in rags, and many were in hospital under the care of our doctors. But their condition did not arouse any sympathy in the breast of Ali Ihsan Pasha, that apostle of humanity. A few who were Armenians, though Russian subjects, he allowed me to take, because of the clause in the armistice providing for the release of all Armenians. The others, too, he had no right to detain, Russia being at peace with Turkey; but he refused to let even the sick go, although it was certain that some of them would not long survive the withdrawal of our doctors. I was obliged to acquiesce in this decision for the moment, but two weeks later pressure was brought to bear on Ali Ihsan and all Russian prisoners were brought into Aleppo.

Another thorny question was the disposal of the small number of Indians who had deserted from our lines—chiefly from Kut under stress of hunger—and had been treated as ordinary prisoners by the Turks. The Pasha refused—no doubt rightly—to give them up against their will, unless their pardon was guaranteed. I was unable, of course, to give any promise on this point, and most of these misguided men were left with the enemy, to regret their treachery and probably to hatch plots for getting back to India undetected. But six men—all Hindu deserters from Kut, being resolved not to remain a minute longer in the Ottoman Empire, took their courage in both hands and elected for repatriation with the rest of the prisoners. Needless to say, they could not “have it both ways,” and they were placed under arrest when we reached Aleppo.



On the morning of November 11 the train started on its journey of 200 miles to Jerablus, carrying 1,000 Indians, who cheered vociferously as they set forth for freedom. It was a heterogeneous collection of vehicles, Turkish open trucks being interspersed with waggons and carriages which had come all the way from Belgium, where they had been commandeered by the Germans. All the passenger coaches had been gutted, and so short was the enemy of textiles that one occasionally saw soldiers dressed in cloth torn from the upholstery of a first-class compartment.

The slowest train that ever dawdled along a branch line in Europe was an express compared with a train on the Baghdad railway in the fifth year of the war. Most of the engines had been destroyed by the Germans just before the British occupation of Aleppo, and the one that pulled our train—the only one east of the Euphrates that could still be called a locomotive—was in the last stages of decay. The fuel was wood, and when the furnace door was opened for stoking the inrush of cold air reduced pressure so much that steam had to be shut off. Our method of progress was therefore a succession of short bursts, during which we sometimes attained as much as ten miles an hour on the level, alternating with long halts to raise steam. Only when opportunity arose to stoke going downhill did we manage to keep moving for more than five miles on end. During the halts, which often took place between stations, the guard (who in Turkey, by the by, always travels on the engine) and a few other members of the numerous staff of the train would wander

off into the nearest village, and might or might not have returned when the train was ready to go on. Protracted stops were invariably made at stations, whether they were necessary or not. Life being so long, what could an hour or so matter? At last, after we had taken twenty-four hours to cover 120 miles, my patience was exhausted, and I took charge of the train. During the rest of the journey no stops were allowed at stations, except for water, and halts between stations to raise pressure were cut down to a minimum. One result of this speeding-up was that we surprised and killed two camels which had strayed into a cutting.

Heavy rain fell, but although many of the men were in open trucks, nothing could damp their spirits: they were like schoolboys going home for the holidays. We who were not returning prisoners found the journey depressing, for we passed thousands of prisoners' graves—unwalled, unmarked by stones, but none the less conspicuous.

On reaching Jerablus on the evening of the second day we were relieved to find that the great bridge over the Euphrates was still intact. The Germans had sent men to blow it up when the capture of Aleppo became imminent, but the Turks, having an eye to the evacuation of their Mesopotamian army under the protection of an armistice, had driven the party away. Jerablus is within ten minutes' walk of Carchemish, the Hittite capital, and the station should surely have been given that historic name. This was Falkenhayn's jumping-off point for his "Yilderim"\*

\* *Yilderim* = lightning.

army. which was to have descended the Euphrates on rafts in 1917 for the recapture of Baghdad—a project upset by Allenby's advance in Palestine. There was no difficulty in finding accommodation for our men, and they were left in charge of one of the I.M.S. doctors, who had come with them from Nisibin.

I myself went on by train for another thirty-five miles to Choban Beg, beyond which the Germans had destroyed the track at many points, and here I spent the night, guarded by Turkish soldiers from a regiment quartered in a neighbouring village. The station had been completely gutted a few days before by marauders, who had even wrenched away the signal levers. This was not the first place on the line that we had seen in ruins. Some of the stations were built in the manner of blockhouses, with the buildings arranged round a quadrangle and loopholed; but the Arabs and Kurds had been unkind enough to select unfortified stations for attack.

Next morning, November 15, I took the car off its truck and made for Aleppo along a reasonably good road. When half the distance had been covered, I had the pleasure of being welcomed by some armoured cars, which the general in Aleppo had sent out to look for me. This was the first meeting between representatives of the Mesopotamia and Palestine Expeditionary Forces, and it was a memorable occasion for me, because I now learned that an armistice with Germany had been signed four days earlier. The news had not reached Jerablus, all telegraph lines west of the Euphrates having been cut.

On arrival at Aleppo, which had been occupied by a cavalry division of the Palestine force a few days before, I found that little road transport was available, and the removal of the men left at Jerablus had to be postponed until the railway could be repaired. But, of course, no time was lost in sending them a supply of drugs and medical comforts by motor.

Meanwhile the train returned from Jerablus to Nisibin in charge of a British sergeant. By the time it got back there, demobilised soldiers from the Turkish army at Mosul had begun to pour in, and as they were anxious to use the train to take them to their homes Ali Ihsan gave orders that the second party of prisoners must wait. This was a breach of the armistice, which provided for the immediate repatriation of our men, and the British doctor whom I had left in charge at Nisibin took a firm line with the Pasha, and compelled him to give way. The train brought out all the remaining prisoners, and it was decided that they should go straight through to Aleppo if the line could be repaired in time. On reaching Jerablus they picked up a small party of British prisoners, who had come down the Euphrates by raft from Birijik, where they had been cutting wood for the railway, and a few Russians from the same place, who had probably escaped Ali Ihsan's notice.

The railway between Choban Beg and Aleppo had been damaged by the Germans at seven different points, and skilled labour was so scarce that it was not easy to do the repairs in a hurry. By hard work, however, they were finished four

hours before the train reached Choban Beg, and it ran through to Aleppo in safety, the other party being brought in from Jerablus two days later. Both trains ran short of fuel, and the prisoners broke up some trucks and sleepers to feed the engine.

At Aleppo the men were quartered in a large Turkish barrack, where they were not as comfortable as everybody wished to make them; but released prisoners are easily satisfied. No time was lost in moving them. They were sent by rail and motor-lorry to Tripoli, and thence by steamer to Egypt, where they re-embarked for England or India. The sick, as soon as they were well enough to travel, went by ambulance direct from Aleppo to Alexandretta, where they were embarked in a hospital ship. A few, saturated with malaria, died in Jerablus and Aleppo—a tragic fate for men who had waited long for freedom.

One man—a Territorial gunner—was missing. In ignorance that the end of the war was at hand, he had escaped from a working camp east of Nisibin a few days before the armistice, and had joined some Syrians who were making for the mountains of Kurdistan. Happily I found another Syrian in Aleppo who knew in which direction the party had gone, and undertook to follow them. He returned three weeks later with the missing man, who had been robbed by Kurds of all that he possessed.

Before leaving Aleppo I visited a hill on the edge of the city, where all prisoners who had died in its hospitals lay buried. Their graves were mingled with those of thousands of Armenians,

and bore no distinguishing mark. An Armenian priest stated that he had buried 50 British and 200 Indian prisoners, but his list of their names was undecipherable.

While all our men from the camps in Mesopotamia were thus well on their way home, about 4,000 others, British, Indian, French, Italian, and Serb, still remained in the Amanus and Taurus Mountains. Much time had been spent in discussing the route by which they were to be repatriated. The first arrangement was that they should embark at Smyrna, but the Turks rightly pointed out that Smyrna was as inaccessible as Constantinople. Then Mersina was suggested, but after 1,600 of the men had been assembled at that port the Navy ruled it out on account of the danger from mines. Finally Alexandretta was decided on. Before the war the harbour was linked to the Baghdad railway by a branch line which ran first along the shores of the Mediterranean, and then struck north to the junction at Toprak Qalah, on the western edge of the Amanus range. This line had, however, been so badly damaged by bombardment from the sea that it could not be used, and the Turks took up the rails between Alexandretta and Erzin and used them elsewhere, leaving the branch intact only from Erzin to Toprak Qalah. It was therefore arranged that the prisoners, including those already at Mersina, should be brought to Erzin by train, and then marched to Alexandretta, a distance of thirty miles.

Colonel Newcombe, who had also been a prisoner in Turkey, had already been sent from Egypt to superintend the clearing of the Amanus and Taurus

camps, and I went by car from Aleppo, through Alexandretta, to give any help which my recent experience might suggest. On my arrival at Adana, after a journey of two days, a tour was made of the hospitals. There were at least half a dozen, and the few prisoners of war still in the town were scattered among them—a single Englishman in one, four Indians in another, and several Serbs and Russians in the rest. An American doctor who had run his own hospital in Adana throughout the war, and had saved many prisoners' lives, gave me a grim account of the surgery in these Turkish hospitals. He had rescued from them a British prisoner who, having lost one leg in a railway accident, was in danger of losing the other solely to indulge the Turkish surgeon's love of the knife.

The hotel of sorts in which we spent the night was crowded next day by civilians interned at Adana, who were anxious to find out when they would be allowed to leave the country. Almost every allied nationality was represented. The British subjects included many Indian pilgrims captured on their way to or from Mecca, and a number of Cypriots who would probably have been deemed Turkish citizens and left at liberty, but for the British annexation of their island. Arrangements were made for all these people to embark with the prisoners of war. I was visited also by innumerable Turkish subjects who wished to return to the Syrian towns from which they had been exiled, and who were convinced that the sole object of the British officer's visit to Adana was to serve them.

We visited the cemetery for British and Indian prisoners who died in Adana, and discovered that after a number of them had been buried, the governor-general of the province, wishing to make a direct road from his house to the railway station, had driven it right over the graves of our men.

Meanwhile 1,100 Indian and 500 Serb prisoners who had been collected at Mersina were brought back to Adana, and we took them on to Erzin for the march to Alexandretta, where they eventually embarked for Egypt and home. Another change of programme now took place, for news was received that a channel had, after all, been cleared through the mines at Mersina, and it was decided that the prisoners still in the Amanus and Taurus should embark there, to save the journey on foot from Erzin. The first to reach Toprak Qalah were a party of 130 Indians from a camp called Maidan Ekbaz. The train which brought them had actually passed through another camp called Airan, which contained a further 350 men, but had not brought these along because the authorities had omitted to instruct the commandant to release them. Possibly their very existence had been forgotten; at the Berne conference a few months earlier the Turkish delegates had admitted that they did not know how many prisoners of ours they held. There was nothing for it but to go back in the train for them. On the way we passed Bagche, where lie buried in the usual nameless graves some hundreds of British prisoners who died in the summer of 1916. At Airan, near the summit of the series of tunnels through the Amanus, a disgraceful state of affairs was revealed. The prisoners had received



no rations for four days, and would have starved had they not been able to buy a little food in the villages. Nihat Pasha, who commanded the Turkish Second Army in Cilicia, promised an investigation, but nothing came of it. The fact was that the arrangements for feeding our men had utterly broken down on the departure of the German officials of the railway company for whom they were working.

With a trainload of 600 men we went on through Adana to Tarsus, which St. Paul would hardly claim to be no mean city if he lived to-day. To this place came in 1916 a large number of sick British prisoners from Kut, for whom there was no room in the hospitals at Adana. They were zealously cared for by the American Mission, but many were past hope of recovery, and 250 died in Tarsus. In case some of our men might possibly have been forgotten we searched the hospitals, but only two Russians were discovered. Going on by the old French railway to Mersina, we found that the commodore of the Palestine coast had just arrived in the destroyer *Welland* to satisfy himself that a safe course had been cleared through the mine-field. A message was received from Nihat Pasha volunteering the assistance of the Turkish sailors who had laid the mines, but as a channel had already been swept the offer was declined with thanks. The operation of sweeping for mines is not free from danger, and there was no particular reason why we should not leave the Turks to complete their own dirty work.

The embarkation of our men at Mersina presented some difficulties. The jetties could

only be used by lighters, most of the local craft had been destroyed or taken away to prevent unpatriotic Turkish subjects from crossing to Cyprus, and the deck of the principal jetty had been removed in case the allies attempted a landing. A big motor-lighter which had been constructed for putting troops on to the Gallipoli peninsula was accordingly sent for. This vessel, after landing her great gangway or "brow," made fast to one of the jetties, but a storm which blew up during the night compelled her to cast off. She was unable to make headway against the wind and piled herself up on the beach, but fortunately she had been built for going aground and was towed off by a trawler without suffering much damage.

Within about a fortnight the embarkation of all the allied prisoners in Asia Minor was completed. The condition of the men brought from the Amanus and Taurus camps, as of those found at Nisibin, was fairly good; but their stories, as well as the evidence of the graveyards, confirmed what has already been said about their treatment in 1916-17. For the many thousands of deaths, and for all that our men suffered, the British government announced its resolve to exact retribution. What came of the plan is related in the postscript to this book.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A MISSION TO WESTERN KURDISTAN

WHILE waiting in Aleppo for instructions to return to Mesopotamia, I met Sir Mark Sykes, who had just come out from London. He told me that he had drawn up, at the request of Mr. Lloyd George, the terms for an armistice with Turkey, and his draft had been cabled to Admiral Calthorpe at Mudros, with instructions to offer it to the delegates from Constantinople; but so intent was the Prime Minister upon an armistice at any price that he gave the Admiral *carte blanche* to make whatever modifications he found necessary, without reference to London. Much to Sykes' disgust, free use was made of this discretion and several clauses were struck out. It may be doubted whether this made any difference to the Armenians in the long run, for their hopes were doomed to be shattered by the pressure of events. But at this date their prospects seemed good, and Sir Mark Sykes, one of the most zealous friends they ever had (even though he was often their candid critic), was anxious to learn what was the condition of those who had survived the massacres in Western Kurdistan, including Urfa, Diarbekr, and Mardin, and what were the relations between the Armenians and the Kurds. A deputation of Kurdish shaikhs

had come to Aleppo with a petition, of which the following is an abbreviated translation :

“We have in our villages and tents 650 Armenians, mostly women and children. Our friendly neighbours have 3,800 more. We wish to hand these people over to the European Powers who are helping the Armenians. If the Allied Powers will send officers to our district we wish to co-operate with them in collecting these Armenians. We must, however, state that this can only be done on condition that the Turks leave our district and European governors take their place, because we know the Turks wish to destroy the Armenians and make enmity between us and the Armenians. If the Turkish gendarmes and governors remain, they can do as they have done before.

“We write this because the Armenians, hearing of the end of the war, leave our tents and seek their homes and are in danger by the roadside, and we believe the Turks may destroy those who are returning, as they destroyed those who came. We have fed these people for four years and do not wish to see the bread we have given them wasted. We also know of 6,800 more Armenians in the tents of tribes friendly to us but too far east to allow us to speak for them. We are sure that if the Europeans send officers to those tribes they will find the same conditions.”

Sykes, whose knowledge of this part of the Turkish Empire was unrivalled, thought that if the facts given were true they presented a splendid opportunity of collecting a large number of Armenians in good health, and of promoting good relations between Armenians and Kurds. As a preliminary measure I was instructed to cross

the Euphrates and obtain as much information as possible.

I left Aleppo in a Ford car on December 30 in company with a member of the deputation—Busrawi, shaikh of one of the Kurdish tribes of the Berazieh confederation. He was a good-looking, richly dressed man of middle age, strongly anglophile and a pleasant companion. We took the north-east road, but after half an hour the *chaussée* (the Turkish official designation for a metalled road) suddenly came to an end. For a few miles out of large towns in the old Turkish Empire there is generally an attempt to provide a hard surface of some kind, but when funds run out the road becomes merely the route taken by traffic, spreading in lines of wheel-ruts a hundred yards in width. In winter it is a bog in which vehicles are sometimes abandoned, and one may, if riding, find one's feet in the mud and one's pony up to his knees in it; in summer it is a ploughed-up field with surface ground to dust. Most of the country's merchandise is carried on the backs of horses, donkeys, and camels, which need no road. A Roman road once followed this particular route, but only one or two milestones survive.

The yellow desert is fertile, and the numerous villages contain a mixed Kurdish and Arab population who live in circular houses of sun-dried mud, shaped like beehives or haystacks. We passed through Membij, now a Circassian village, but once the great city of Hierapolis, where the worshippers of the nature goddess Atergatis used to assemble; and where a large pond can still be seen containing the remains of stairs by which they



BUSRAWI

With two minor chiefs

*By permission of The Oxford University Press from  
Mr. C. I. Woodley's "Dead Turans and Living Men"*

used to enter the water in order to swim out to the altar in the middle.

At Tel Ahmar we reached the Euphrates—impressive, but yellow and ugly, like the country through which it runs. The ferry-boat was a flat-bottomed hulk, in shape like a coal-scuttle scoop without a handle ; its square prow nearly level with the water, its stern fifteen feet high, supporting an enormous pole—half rudder, half oar, manipulated by a man who stands on a platform. I was assured that this antediluvian vessel would easily transport a Ford car. She carried it without difficulty, but the incline on each bank was so steep and muddy that to get the car on and off the boat required four hours of strenuous work and the assistance of a number of other travellers, who were stirred into activity by the knowledge that they could not cross until we relinquished the boat. When eventually we pushed off we were carried a mile downstream, broadside on, by the current, and had to be hauled back to the landing-place.

Dusk had fallen when we reached the left bank, and we decided to spend the night in a village inhabited by one of the Berazieh tribes. It was not the tribe of my companion Busrawi ; but his personality and ability had secured his recognition as overlord by many other members of the confederation, and they welcomed his guests as their own. Some of the Berazieh Kurds are nomadic, some semi-nomadic, and some sedentary. This particular tribe never moved far from their village, which is surrounded by a fertile plain supplying them with wheat in abundance, and their horses and large herds of sheep and goats with pasturage.

Most of the houses are of the mud beehive type, but the shaikh occupies a square one-room building of stone. Here we were hospitably received.

In the middle of the room, under a hole in the roof, was a large open wood fire, round which we squatted on cushions. Unfortunately, a wind was blowing and most of the smoke remained in the room, to the great discomfort of myself and my driver and orderly, but to the complete unconcern of our hosts. While a meal was being prepared, we drank coffee, smoked cigarettes, watched gambling with dice, and listened to folk-songs of great length and much repetition. Dinner was the gargantuan affair with which a host in Turkey, of whatever race or religion, always confronts an English visitor (except when he is the "precious guest of the Turkish government"). Everybody had a pile of chupatties on the floor in front of him, and in our midst was an enormous brass tray containing dishes heaped high with rice, mutton, chickens, eggs, vegetables, and sweetmeats, to which everybody helped himself as he pleased. Our hosts, like most other Kurds, were not sufficiently strict Moslems to be teetotallers, and as we were tired and cold the *raki* which they gave us to drink tasted excellent. The meal was served by the womenfolk (who wear no veils), and after it was over they brought us water to wash our hands and then ate what their lords and we had left.

The festivities in honour of the English visitor were continued next day. Horse-racing (to which the Kurds and their Arab ponies are devoted) was followed by a game remarkably like hockey. Then we adjourned to the open-air village dancing floor,





EUPHRATES FERRY

where, to the accompaniment of pipe, zither, and drum (but chiefly drum), the youths of the village writhed, shuffled, and clapped their hands for hours without ceasing. The ladies took no part. Appreciation of this sort of dancing is an acquired taste in a European, and I was not sorry when I had to leave in order to continue my journey to Urfa, on the other (north) side of the Baghdad railway. The route lay through rolling treeless prairie land, dotted with curious little cairns of loose stones, erected by travellers.

Urfa is better known to history as Edessa, the seat of a Crusader kingdom. It is still surrounded by its Roman walls, and looks picturesque from a distance, but on inspection reveals the usual narrow streets, dilapidated houses and mosques, and general filth and wretchedness which one finds everywhere in Turkey. We slept at the German mission.

On the following day a number of Armenians called upon me, mostly in the Mussulman garb which they have adopted as a protective measure. Three hundred of them, survivors of the massacres and deportations of 1915, wished to return to their homes at Kharput, Sivas, and Erzerum. I advised them to wait until the spring, when the journey would be less arduous and the British government might be able to arrange for their protection, both en route and at their destinations. This hope was, unfortunately, never to be realised.

I visited the Armenian quarter, or rather what was the Armenian quarter until it was destroyed in the massacres of 1915. It appears that from April to October of that year the killing of Armenians

continued steadily, prompted, like practically every other Armenian massacre in history, from Constantinople. Most of the victims were sent out to the Diarbekr road (which came to be known as the "killing road"), and there made away with. In October, a few Armenians who had armed themselves offered resistance to Turkish soldiers who were searching their houses, and a sort of siege of the Armenian quarter lasted for eight days. Then Fakhri Pasha arrived with a German staff officer, and with guns served by German artillerymen. The Armenian quarter was bombarded and completely destroyed (the only building spared being a church belonging to the American mission), and the survivors were hanged. Reconstruction had not begun at the time of my visit, and the scene was as desolate as any on the Western Front.

According to my informants, persecution had not ceased since the armistice. When I called upon the Turkish *mutasarrif* (governor), Nasrat Bey, I warned him that he would be held personally responsible for the good treatment of the Armenians in his *sanjak* (district); and in particular for the restoration of Armenian properties to their owners and for the protection of Armenians travelling. These were idle words if not reinforced by action on the part of the British government, but, pending a decision on that point, to endeavour to frighten the *mutasarrif* seemed the only thing to do.

On leaving Urfa I made my headquarters at Arab Punar station, on the Baghdad railway, about twenty miles east of the Euphrates, and close to Seruj, a village said to have taken its name from

the great-grandfather of Abraham.\* The survivors of the convoys of Armenians who were driven across the Euphrates from Anatolia in 1915 had camped here on their way to Upper Mesopotamia, and many skulls of those who got no further on that terrible trek were still lying about. Some Turks make a practice of decapitating anything they kill, whether it be a chicken or a Christian.

On arrival I was handed a telegram of over 500 words from my old acquaintance Ali Ihsan Pasha, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief at Nisibin. On translation it ran as follows :

“Very urgent. Not to be delayed for a minute. To the English colonel who has arrived in the district of Urfa.

“I learn that you have arrived in the district of Urfa, which is within the area guarded by the Sixth Ottoman Army. Please let me know why you have entered my area without telling me and without first getting my consent ; also what is your mission and name. The armistice contains no authority for such a journey. It is well known that the English government has always respected the terms of treaties, and this infringement of the treaty is astonishing. I am also told that the tranquillity of the population is being disturbed. It is contrary to the armistice for servants of the English government, wearing uniform, to act as spies and to stir up the inhabitants. Further, these things are not only contrary to the armistice but are an infringement of universal law.” (Here followed another 400 words to much the same effect.)

\* Gen. xi. 20.

“We desire absolute independence within our frontiers. That is why we detested the Germans, who wished to rule us.”

The last sentence of this message was a strange remark to telegraph to an enemy officer about an ally. It showed how great was the resentment among Turkish officers to their government's subservience to the Germans. And if subordination to a successful partner had been humiliating to their pride, how much more bitter must have been their feelings when they discovered that they had attached themselves to a losing cause.

I replied that I had come to inquire into the action taken to give effect to the terms of the armistice, and that any complaints should be addressed to the General Staff at Aleppo. At the same time I asked Ali Ihsan to arrange for the transport and feeding of about a hundred Armenians whom I found quite destitute at Arab Punar, waiting for a train.

The answer was characteristic :

“I have received your message. Who are you? Where have you come from? What is your mission? Tell me that. The Armenians are free, like all Ottoman subjects, and can go where they wish. But I have no orders from my government either to transport or to feed them. I am an army commander, not a clerk for exiles. Before you ask me about Armenians of whom I know nothing, it would be better to explain why your government did not feed our demobilised soldiers when they were en route between Jerablus and Katma.”

In spite, however, of this haughty message, I found very soon afterwards that bread was being given to the Armenians at the station by Ali Ihsan's order. A little later a train arrived from Nisibin with a number of Turkish soldiers who were being demobilised. The driver had orders from Ali Ihsan to return at once to Nisibin for another load, but it seemed a splendid opportunity of getting the Armenians into Aleppo, and I put them in the train and compelled the driver at the point of my revolver to take it on to Jerablus, now in British occupation. I accompanied it to see that this order was obeyed, and to report to the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Allenby, who had just arrived at Jerablus. I then returned to Arab Punar.

Next day I received another telegram from Ali Ihsan, peremptorily ordering me to return to Aleppo, and the station-master told me very apologetically that he had instructions from Ali Ihsan to eject me. A similar message was given to me by the Governor of Seruj, but nothing happened, and I learned from a Greek clerk on the station-master's staff that Ali Ihsan had given strict instructions that on no account was force to be used. So we stayed on, and I had a telegram from Sir Mark Sykes telling me that he was coming out himself two days later to interview some of the Kurdish shaikhs.

While I was waiting at Arab Punar a very pretty Armenian girl dashed into the station, threw herself at my feet, and prayed to be defended against a Turkish officer, who had, she said, forcibly kept her in Urfa as his mistress for the

last two years, and from whom she had escaped to appeal for British protection. A minute later a gendarme arrived and announced that he had come to arrest her for a theft of jewellery from this officer. The situation was embarrassing. It was slightly relieved when I asked the gendarme for his warrant and found he had none, but even so I had no right to interfere in a purely civil dispute. Nevertheless, to hand the girl over was unthinkable, so I locked her up in one of the rooms of the station until the arrival of Sir Mark Sykes, when she was placed in charge of the guard of British soldiers on his train, and taken into Aleppo. It was all very like a cinema story.

Sir Mark Sykes had a long interview with Busrawi and other Kurdish shaikhs, who received him enthusiastically; some of them had known him before the war. They had interpreted my mission, and his arrival, as an indication that the British government was going to help them to throw off Ottoman sovereignty, and they fervently proclaimed their desire for a British protectorate. Of course, Sykes told them that nothing was settled, and that for the present they must continue to obey the Turkish authorities. The future of Kurdistan was to be determined at the Peace Conference, and the extent to which the British government would support their aspirations depended on whether they showed themselves united, and also on the way they treated the Armenians and other Christians.

A few weeks later Sir Mark Sykes died in Paris, to the lasting regret of everybody who knew him.

I was now instructed to investigate conditions at Diarbekr and Mardin, and I left Arab Punar by car on January 14. Heavy snow having fallen, we had a very cold and depressing two-day drive to Diarbekr, over barren hilly country, mostly 3,000 to 4,000 feet above sea-level, littered with broken basalt from the volcanoes of Armenia, now extinct. In places the road itself is paved with loose boulders of basalt—a severe trial even for a Ford car, and sometimes too rough even for Turkish bullock-carts, which leave it and make a parallel track a few yards away. We saw many vultures, which must have flourished and multiplied during the Armenian deportations along this road in 1915. At the gloomy town of Suverek we spent a night in the house of a hospitable Kurdish pasha, who produced for my signature a visitors' book, containing the names of all Europeans (there were not many) who had passed that way during half a century.

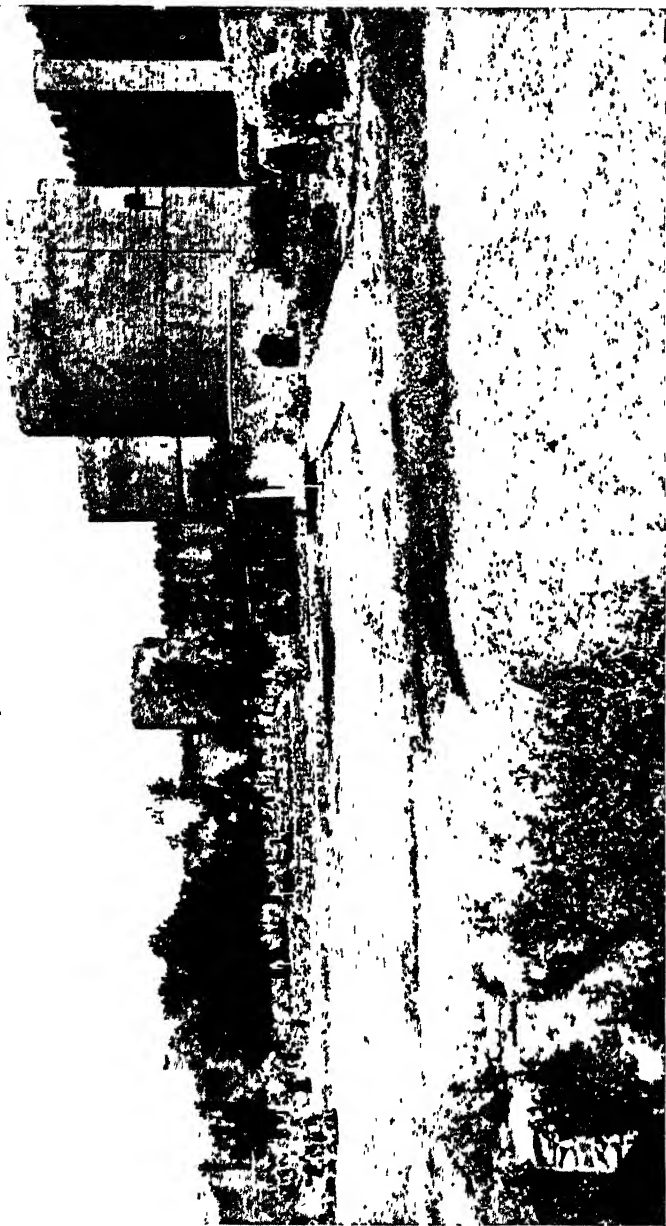
Diarbekr, the old Roman frontier fortress of Amida, on the right bank of the Tigris, or rather a mile or so away from it, must be always an unpleasant town, for its massive Roman walls of black basalt, fully 35 feet high, give it a prison-like aspect, and the place has a bad reputation for typhus, ophthalmia, boils, and scorpions. On this occasion the inhabitants seemed more than usually dejected, for the reason, I was told, that the armistice had put an end to all army contracts and brought business to a standstill. I called upon the *vali* and was visited by a number of Armenians, nearly all of whom were exiles from



other districts, and whose stories resembled those told to me at Urfa.

The road to Mardin was said to be one of the best in Turkey. So it may have been once, but the passing of convoys of German lorries with steel tyres had made it far the worst I had struck since leaving Baghdad three months before—which was saying a good deal. About six miles out my car sank up to her axles in mud, and in the effort to get her out one of the hubs broke. There was nothing for it but to leave the car where she was. The Ottoman Empire was strewn with German cars and lorries abandoned in like case. But Diarbekr is in communication with places lower down the river by the rafts which have already been described, and I subsequently endeavoured to arrange for my car to be sent down to Mosul by this method. In the meantime, my orderly and interpreter cheerfully trudged back to Diarbekr on foot, and they returned with a Turkish convoy and two mule-drawn transport carts which were placed at our disposal for the journey to Mardin. We were three days on the road, the distance being about sixty miles, and we slept each night (so far as the bitter cold would allow) in the tent of the commander of the convoy.

Mardin occupies a remarkable position on an almost conical hill about 3,000 feet high, the ascent of which was very laborious. On our arrival in the town, Ali Ihsan again made a demonstration of his feelings. When I presented myself at the military commandant's office the door was slammed in my face, and on returning to the carts I found my kit being flung into the road



DIARBEKR

by soldiers, in pouring rain and in full view of the inhabitants. The carts then drove off. I learned afterwards that a telegram ordering this insult had arrived from Ali Ihsan, who had received news at Nisibin of the accident to my car and had seized his opportunity. My predicament was extremely ignominious, and it seemed not improbable that the unpleasant-looking crowd which the incident drew around me might take their cue from Ali Ihsan and become offensive, if not dangerous. Moreover, I was in the middle of enemy territory, a hundred and fifty miles from the nearest British force, and without any means of transport.

Providentially there was a swift change for the better, and one full of humour. I asked for the mayor, and learned that he lived only a few doors away. Before I could get to his house he came running out, and to my immense relief cordially urged me to stay with him. I was mystified by the contrast between his behaviour and that of the soldiers, until I heard that at the very moment when Ali Ihsan was telegraphing orders to the military commandant to treat me with contempt, the *vali* of Diarbekr was ordering the mayor to give me all the help possible! We stayed with him for three days, enjoying splendid hospitality. Through the civil telegraph office he despatched a telegram for me to Arab Punar, for transmission to Aleppo. I offered payment in paper money, but he paid for it himself in silver, explaining that although Turkish paper was officially as good as silver, and therefore had to be accepted at all telegraph offices at its face value, it was well understood that messages paid

for in paper were likely to be delayed for many days!

At the American Protestant Mission I heard an account of the massacre or deportation of most of the Christian inhabitants. Mardin is not a large town, but it seems to have a greater number of different sects of Christians than any other place in Turkey. They form three groups—the independent Churches, the Uniate bodies in communion with Rome, and a miscellaneous group of Protestants and other secessionists. The independent Churches comprise the Armenian or Gregorian, the Jacobite or West Syrian, and the Nestorian or East Syrian (who are sometimes called Assyrian and have a Patriarch, called Mar-Shimun, belonging to a family in which the office is hereditary). The Uniate Churches include the Armenian Uniate, the Jacobite or West Syrian Uniate, and the Chaldean or East Syrian Uniate, all of which acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, though each has its own priesthood, liturgy, and ritual. Finally, American Protestant missionaries—Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist—have proselytised many thousands of Armenians and a few members of the other Churches, unlike the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Nestorians, which has contented itself with educational and medical work. It is not surprising that the story is told in Mardin of a cock which spoke and said: "Christ's religion is the only true faith." The owner asked his shaikh whether he should become a Christian or kill the cock as an infidel. The shaikh reflected, and at last decided that they must keep the cock to see *which* of Christ's religions it proclaimed as

the true religion ; and in the meantime they would continue to be Moslems !

In discussing Armenians, my host told me a legend which epitomises the Turkish conception of their character. Once upon a time, Jesus Christ (about whom, of course, there are many Moslem traditions) came down from heaven to spend a month on the Bosphorus, accompanied by three servants—a Frenchman, a Greek, and an Armenian. At the end of the month He prepared to return, and offered each of the three whatever present he might choose, but the three presents must be different. The Frenchman was asked first and chose glory. The Greek, coming next, chose money, and great riches were bestowed upon him. The Armenian was asked last, and said : “ I suppose the money’s gone ? ” “ Yes,” said Christ, “ you’re too late for money.” “ Then, O Lord, all I ask is a little knowledge.” “ A modest request. What do you want to know ? ” “ O Lord, which of the other two has got the money ? ” \*

Another memory of Mardin is of a much-needed visit to the Turkish bath, where a friendly citizen in the hottest room offered me a share of the sausage which he was eating, and would take no

\* A different version of this story is that Christ brought only one servant, an Armenian, to whom He offered anything in the world. “ But,” said our Lord, “ whatever you choose I shall bestow twice as much on your greatest friend.” “ O Lord,” replied the Armenian, “ put out one of my eyes.” I quote these stories merely to show how bitter is the Turkish view of Armenian peculiarities. Whatever may be said against the Armenian, it should never be forgotten that he has remained faithful to his religion through centuries of persecution.

refusal. It is a Turkish custom to feed during one's bath.

I was still dependent on the military authorities for transport, and this fact gave Ali Ihsan one more chance of being offensive. I was surprised to find (for the fact was unknown to our Intelligence Department) that Mardin (or rather the foot of the hill on which it stands) had been connected by a branch line with Darbasiyah, on the Baghdad railway, the rails having been taken from a Syrian branch line which had been pulled up. I asked for an engine to take me to Arab Punar, but was told none was available. On the third day, however, I was told I could have a place in a troop train which was leaving, and I bade the mayor a most grateful farewell. On arrival at the station I was offered only standing room in a truck crowded with Turkish soldiers, although the train commandant's truck was empty. I could not submit to a studied slight of this sort, and I mounted the foot-plate of the engine and said I would travel on it. There followed a wordy tussle, during which, somehow or other, the train commandant discovered that he had been outside Kut during the siege and I inside. This fact caught his imagination and changed rancour into friendliness, and I was allowed to remain on the engine. We reached Arab Punar the same night, and next morning I got another car, with which I again crossed the Euphrates at the Birijik ferry, and visited Aintab and Killis (once large Armenian centres) before returning to Aleppo.

Ali Ihsan's behaviour, which on this and other occasions showed a deliberate attempt to foment

anti-British feeling, did not go unpunished. His arrest was demanded by Lord Allenby, and he was interned in Malta.

I reported that most of the Armenians surviving in the districts I had inspected were exiles who had been banished from Asia Minor in 1915, the pre-war Armenian inhabitants having been almost entirely removed by massacre or deportation. Some of the exiles were willing to remain, provided their new abode was purged of Turkish control. Most were desperately keen to get back to their native country, even though they were ignorant whether their houses were still standing; the homing sense of the Armenian is ineradicable. More urgent than repatriation was the release of the thousands of Armenian women and children living with Kurds, Turks, and Arabs. There was scarcely a girl over twelve who had not been a wife to some Moslem. A decree that Christians were free to leave Moslem houses had been received from Constantinople, but the officials were inactive, and the men with whom the refugees were living were not inclined to surrender them. One of the most pressing needs in the work of reconstruction was the collection of detailed information. Many children were separated from their mothers, and wives from their husbands, simply through ignorance of their whereabouts. Some of the children in Moslem hands were, indeed, unaware that they were of Christian parentage.

Before the Armenians could get going again, the houses, lands, vineyards, churches, and schools that had been confiscated must be returned to

them. On this matter also, orders had been received from Constantinople, but little had been done to give effect to them. In some cases, in exchange for a receipt for the house and all its contents, only the bare walls had been given back. Equally important was the re-erection of houses in places such as Urfa, where the entire Armenian quarter had been destroyed. Only a small proportion of the houses would be required, the survivors of the massacre being so few, and the Armenians themselves would build them, if only they were protected from persecution. Excellent relief work was already being done by the various missions, and a certain amount of money was even being distributed by the Turkish government.

If it was desired to help the Armenians to realise their rights and to save what was left of the wreck of their nation, an officer of the allied powers should, I submitted, be stationed at each centre of a Christian population, to organise repatriation, reconstruction, and relief, to bring pressure to bear upon those who denied justice to Christians, to advise on the removal of recalcitrant officials, and, above all, to instil confidence in the people. The influence of Ali Ihsan Pasha was paramount in all the districts I visited, and was anti-Christian as well as anti-British. In some places the persons to be removed were not the officials, but a clique which represented the Committee of Union and Progress, and dictated to the officials their course of action. My report ended with the suggestion that the work of reconstruction might be entrusted to officers of the American Red Cross, the influence



of America, through its schools, hospitals, and missions, being already very great.

Armenian hopes were, unfortunately, never realised. America declined a mandate for the country. The British military authorities had no troops to spare and did not consider it desirable to send officers alone, except a few control officers who were stationed for some months in easily accessible centres, mostly in the west. Such caution seemed excessive, considering what was at stake. During the first few months after the armistice—*i.e.*, before Mr. Lloyd George had thrown himself into the arms of M. Venizelos—British prestige in Turkey was at its zenith, British influence unchallengeable. The Porte could not resist and could only obey; the Nationalist rebellion had not begun. The position was not unlike that which followed the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, when a Turkish official remarked to an English traveller:

“All is rotten, from the Sultan downwards. Our armies are beaten in the field, the people are starving throughout the land, justice is asleep, honesty is unknown, patriotism is dead. There is but one hope, and that is the active intervention of England.”\*

Beaconsfield seized the opportunity, and British military consuls were sent to various cities in Asia Minor; among them being Kitchener, then a subaltern, who was stationed at Kastamuni. They had no troops to protect them, but their advent

\* H. C. Barkley: “A Ride through Asia Minor and Armenia.” 1891.

was welcomed, not only by the Christians, to whom they were a beacon of hope, but by every section of the population except the officials. They stood for justice and incorruptibility, they had no axes of their own to grind, they devoted themselves to the interests of the inhabitants. When Gladstone came into power in 1880 the British government ceased to support them, and in 1882 they were transferred to Egypt. We had the same opportunity after the armistice of 1918, but we did not avail ourselves of it, though the cost would have been trifling. Shortly afterwards our misguided support of the Greeks drew the whole of Anatolia to the flag of Mustafa Kemal, sacrificed most of the fruits of our victory, and made further massacres inevitable.

The question whether an alliance was possible between Armenians and Kurds, as suggested by Sykes, was difficult to answer. Forty years ago, when Turkish Kurdistan was reduced from semi-independence and brought under direct control by Abdul Hamid II., what he feared most was an understanding between the two races, and to prevent it he found the Kurds employment as *hamidiyah* (irregular cavalry), who had a free hand to oppress the Armenians as they chose. This task was congenial, for ever since the days of Xenophon the Kurds have had a reputation, second to none, as callous and faithless robbers and brigands.\* The

\* There is a Persian legend that Solomon sent for 400 virgins from the east, who on their way were seized by the devils in the country north of Mesopotamia, and the offspring of this union were called the Kurds (Soane: "To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan

same opportunity was given to them during the war, and there is no doubt that they had their share in the persecution of the Armenians. Nevertheless, I was often told by Armenians that the Kurds took a more active part in looting than in massacre, and there is no doubt that many Armenian children found shelter in Kurdish houses and tents. On the whole, it seems certain that although the two races might get on well enough together under a strong and impartial government, the Kurds will continue to plunder the Armenians so long as the government encourages their predatory instincts. Can anyone doubt that this encouragement will be forthcoming while the government remains Turkish? When the work of plunder has been completed the whole of Kurdistan will probably be made a forbidden zone for Armenians.

On reaching Aleppo, I was ordered to return to Baghdad, but as the road between Aleppo and Mosul was considered unsafe, owing to the attitude of the tribesmen under Ali Ihsan's instigation, I had to take the extremely roundabout route through Damascus, Haifa, Egypt, Bombay, and Basrah. This was my third passage up the Persian Gulf, and I have never been down it, for after a few weeks at Baghdad and Mosul I returned to England, via Tehran, the Caspian, and the Caucasus.

This last journey, being entirely through territory

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in Disguise"). It is only fair to the Kurds to add that, according to another version, they are descended from Solomon himself by the same ladies.

still in British occupation, was devoid of incident. But a leaflet which was being distributed among the British troops in Baku when I passed through in May, 1919, seems worth transcribing :

“COMERADS BRITISH SOLDIERS.

“We congratulate you with great international workmen holliday—the first of May. To day for workmen of all parts of world is great holliday.

“Comerads soldiers of British troops !! The great war of imperialists continued 5 ears finished, and now people of all countries struggle against its own government and against rich classes. The firs who has destroyed the power of its government and rich class is Russian workmen and peasants. They coll now workmen of all the world to go against all the kings all the rich class.

“Germany, Austria followed our example. Workmen of These countries have no more imperialistic government, they have Consills of workmen, peasant and soldiers deputles.

“Great battle between imperialistic rich class and peasants began.

“With Russian workmen, workmen of England, Germany, France, Austria, America you must coll to-day.

“Behind international imperialism !

“Be a life international revolution of workmen !!

“Be a life third international of communism !!

“Be a life general Union of Sovetrepublic of World !!

“Be a life British Socialistic Republic!!

“Be a life the Russian bolchevic party!!

• “*Comitee of Russian Communist Party  
of Baku.*”

The effect of this precious document upon the British soldier, who has a sense of humour and could see for himself to what a pass Bolshevism had brought Russia, is not difficult to imagine.

## POSTSCRIPT

IN 1921 the British government abandoned the right to punish the Turks responsible for the ill-treatment of British prisoners during the war.

Early in 1919, the British Military Commission in Constantinople handed the Ottoman government a list of Turkish officers and men who were "wanted" for various crimes against our men, and sixty persons were arrested and sent to Malta.\* The charges against them included murder, the manslaughter of hundreds (collectively thousands) by neglect, merciless flogging, gross cruelty of various kinds, unnatural offences against our men, wholesale theft of their property. Instead of arraigning them promptly, our government thought it necessary to wait for the Peace Treaty with Turkey, and the accused were still awaiting trial when the abortive Treaty of Sèvres was signed in the summer of 1920. This agreement provided for the trial by allied military tribunals of all Turks charged with violating the laws and customs of war, but it was never ratified, and the sixty languished in Malta. In the meantime Mustafa Kemal, the Nationalist leader, established his authority throughout most of Asia Minor, and

\* In addition to about seventy others who were confined for political reasons.

about thirty British officers and men, including Colonel Rawlinson, fell into his hands. These prisoners were an enormous asset which he did not fail to make the most of. After prolonged bargaining, and after fifteen or sixteen Turks, including Ali Ihsan Pasha, had escaped from Malta by the simple expedient of breaking their parole (why were men charged with crime ever allowed liberty on parole?), the British government agreed to hand back unconditionally all the men under arrest, in exchange for the thirty British prisoners; a very one-sided bargain, for we surrendered criminals in return for ordinary prisoners of war who had committed no offence at all. Thus were released scot-free the persons deemed responsible, or partly responsible, for the appalling mortality among our men in Turkey.

Assuming that, once the peace treaty was signed, the trials could not be held until it had been ratified, and granted also that fear of reprisals against British prisoners was a sound reason for inaction while they were in Kemalist hands, yet it is impossible to understand why the Turks under arrest were not brought to trial soon after the armistice, before the peace treaty had limited our powers and before the Kemalists had any prisoners of ours to bargain with (they did not capture the first of them until a year after the armistice). When the question was raised in the House of Lords, the government excused itself on the ground that the peace treaty had not been ratified. This was a subterfuge. We arrested these Turks not in the exercise of any authority given to us by the armistice, which was, indeed, silent concerning

war crimes, but in pursuance of the right of a belligerent to punish offences against the laws of war. If we did not need a peace treaty to allow us to arrest them, why did we need one to allow us to try them? Any number of witnesses were available against them. Every released or escaped prisoner who came to this country during the war was subjected to an elaborate examination about his treatment, and after the armistice committees sat in Egypt to hear complaints from repatriated officers and men. All the evidence so obtained might have been immediately supplied to the military authorities in Malta, and the accused brought to trial forthwith. We were in a commanding position to avenge the British prisoners who died in Turkish hands, but we frittered it away by idle procrastination.

Another thing which has never been explained is why Colonel Rawlinson and his companions in misfortune were allowed to remain so long (some of them over eighteen months) in the hands of the Kemalists. At the time when they were arrested, 40,000 Turks taken prisoner by us during the war were still interned in Egypt and elsewhere, but all of them were sent back to Turkey shortly afterwards. Why did we not refuse to repatriate them until Rawlinson and the rest were released? It may be urged that we had promised the Constantinople government that we would return all war prisoners, and therefore could not make use of them to bargain with the Nationalist government at Angora, which was not officially recognised by Constantinople. But if Angora could use Colonel Rawlinson to get back the men in Malta (who had



been handed over to us by the Constantinople government), surely we could use the 40,000 war prisoners to get back Rawlinson. Angora, even more than Constantinople, was interested in the return of the 40,000 men. If we were at war with Kemal, we were entitled to keep them until he released Rawlinson. If we were not at war with Kemal, he had no right to detain Rawlinson. It is difficult to believe that strong action by the government, including, if necessary, a threat to bombard a Kemalist port, might not have procured the release of all the British prisoners.

Nor were any effective measures taken to secure their well-being while they remained in captivity, in spite of all that was known of the treatment of prisoners in Turkey during the war. Although some Frenchmen who had also been arrested by Kemal, and who, like Rawlinson, were imprisoned at Erzerum, regularly received clothing, food, and medicine sent from France,\* nothing was done for our men until a few weeks before their release; and even then no parcels would have been despatched but for the initiative and persistence of the Red Cross. Rawlinson and his comrades were consequently in a deplorable condition when at last they were repatriated.

Knowing how British prisoners fell between two stools during the war, one guesses that the real reason for this lethargy was that neither the Foreign Office nor the War Office would shoulder the responsibility for these men. Their neglect strengthens the case, put forward in Chapter XII.,

\* Through a Turkish Red Crescent doctor at Trebizond, who was quite willing to forward supplies to English prisoners also.

for making one government office solely responsible for promoting the welfare of all British prisoners of war, including men captured by 'a force with whom we are not officially at war. It would be the duty of this department, while leaving no stone unturned to obtain their release (if that were consistent with our national honour and interests), to take every action within its power which might keep them alive, mitigate their hardships, and bring to account any one ill-treating them.

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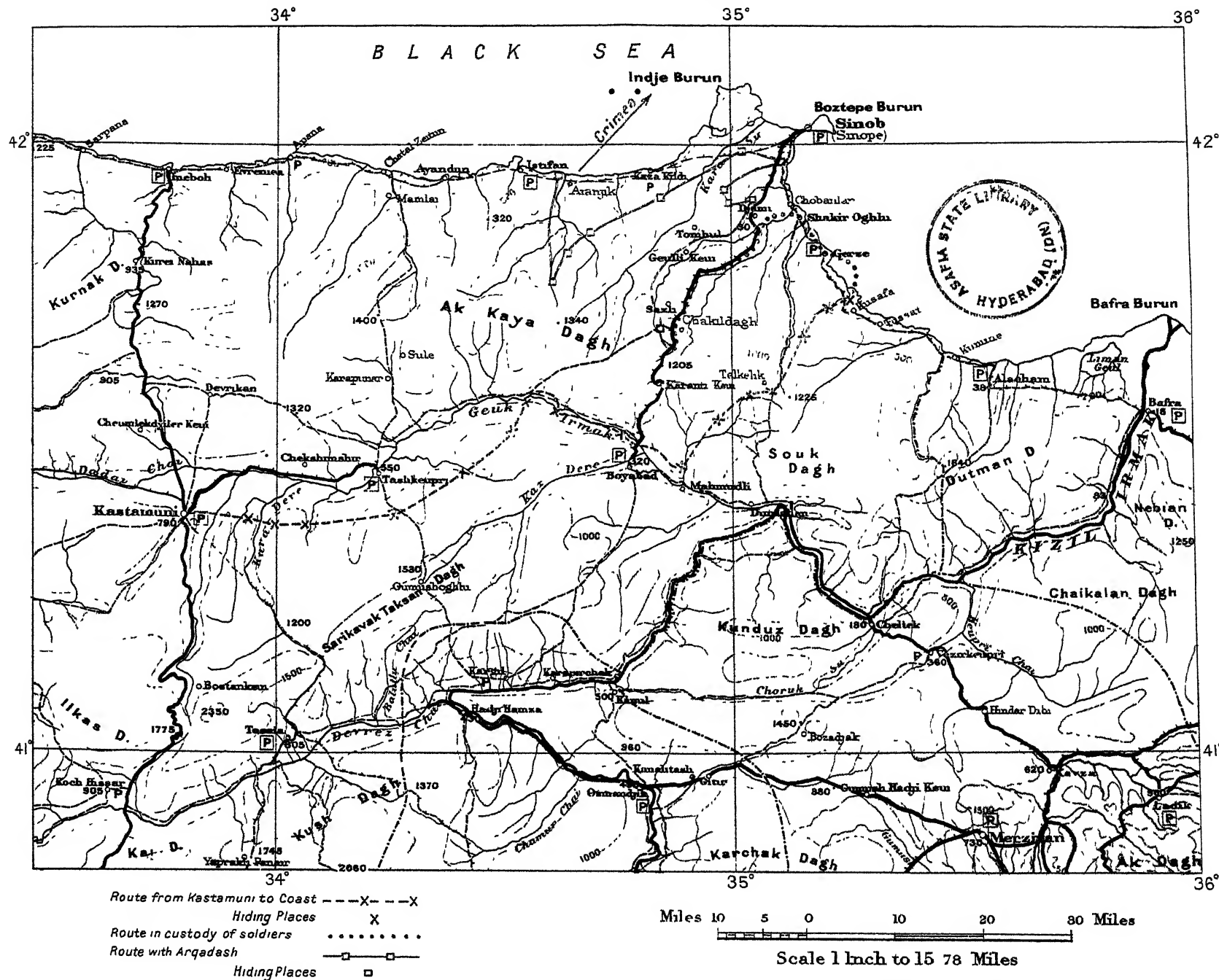
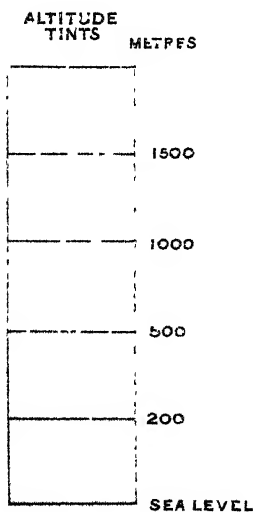
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<i>Dagh, (D)</i>	<i>Mountain</i>
<i>Dere</i>	<i>Valley</i>
<i>Irmaç</i>	<i>River</i>
<i>Kuu</i>	<i>Village</i>
<i>Su</i>	<i>River</i>



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